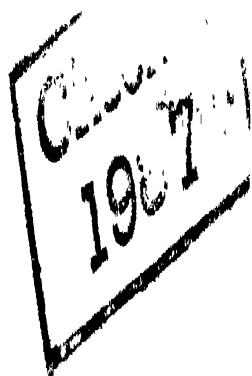


# THE PAINTER AND THE LADY



*By the Same Author*

THE WORLD IS MINE

# THE PAINTER AND THE LADY

By  
WILLIAM J. BLAKE



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To the memory  
of my dear friend  
RALPH FOX,  
killed in action  
at Córdoba.

*The dead shall live,  
the living die.*



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BOOK ONE

THE POPLAR AND THE ROSE





*They Gathered in the Vineyards*

THE bells of Saint-Nazaire swung widely and rang gaily over the prosperous queen of the vineyards, Béziers, madcap city of the South. She sits, as befits a fat talkative queen, on a wide stool, looking upon the turning river Orb, on the Canal of the Midi. Her wines were dispatched along these waterways, along the mighty Roman routes that cross the whole of Languedoc, and by the steam engines that puffed diligently along the marshes towards the sea. The bells rang and filled her fleshy ears, set with jewelled rings, the reward of centuries of profits.

It was high noon. The mob of talkers was gathered along the four-avenued Allées Paul-Riquet, clattering insolently. None regarded the speech of the other. Each impatiently waited the opening for his own flood of words and gesticulations to be released. The twenty cafés, six of them ultra-chic and modernist, were jammed with a metropolitan crowd that only a small French southern city can conjure on the instant. In this provincial centre of seventy thousand souls, an animation reigned that would have shamed the more celebrated but relatively dull thoroughfares called Broadway, Piccadilly and the Champs-Élysées. For here individual animation was at the highest point attainable by our simian species. The varied noises of ten thousand male egoists were offset by the swish of fans from thousands of magpie-clad dark women and girls. The high sun of Provence cracked through the trees and dappled the shoulders of the *boulevardiers* with countless shades of yellow and green light. Ice-cream vendors were busy. The newspaper kiosks were assailed for the latest editions of newspapers in French, Provençal or Spanish.

Ostentation was the signature of its people. They were lavish, show-off, knew no moderation in anything. City of the Albigensian massacre, kettle of religious hatreds for centuries, it boiled with Saracen and Visigoth. That city knew prosperity but it never knew peace.

Class hatred now was as intense as religious hatred had once been.

In that year 1931, those who held left and right views in politics sheered away from each other. Both sides, rich and poor, were as showily dressed as their means allowed and were equally voluble. They laughed so much that it was hard to believe how passionately they detested each other.

The boulevards channelled the adult population of the town from the Plateau of the Poets down to the dilapidated but pretentious Théâtre. The occasion of the large assembling of the people was the arrival of the *gavaches*, the multitude of mountaineers come down from the Cévennes to work in the vineyards about Béziers, or, as the poor folk expressed it, "to taste the life."

Soon the crowd of mountaineers rounded the Place de la République, led like cattle on a wide Argentine plain. They were a trifle embarrassed when they saw the gay city crowd gathered there to stare at them, but soon they gave back their knowing shepherd's glance to the overfed men of the town. There they were, in corduroys, maroon or chestnut brown, or in large blue or black smocks, their faces wrinkled by the mountain sun and chapped by the hill winds, with broad-brimmed peak hats, all black, and tramping along faithfully under the leadership of a heavily moustached, broad-cheeked patron, dangling his heavy watch chain.

They came into the countless vineyards of the Hérault, some for a month, some for a season, some stronger souls for a year. They left their lambs upon the mountainsides to the tender mercies of the Roquefort companies. There was not a penny among these men. They were to serve as wagoners, labourers, farmers, pressers of wines in the ample cellars of the plain. Some came to prune the vines but most came for a later task, the gathering of the grapes. In spring they sulphated the languishing vines; in summer they sprinkled the pretty green clusters of grapes against the dread phylloxera.

They came by the tens of thousands from eagles' nests among the mountains into the flatlands. They were tired of their naked plateaux, thirsty as the parched earth of their overgrazed highlands. They left the stench of their mean chalets to come down and admire the glories of man conglomerated.

As the troop rounded the Théâtre, a burst of laughter went up from the city mob. Their ungainliness and seeming mountain idiocy let loose the wisecrack comments, for centuries the dandies' ritual against the casual workers. But the gipsies among them

hurled back and won on the exchange. They thronged in smelly rags, loaded with lice, their children skeletal and red-eyed with trachoma, leaning on dying donkeys, more starved even than their masters. Hangers-on of circuses, street performers seeking easy change, they pitched the wit of forlorn clowns at the mocking city men. The Savoyards, their chimneys left unswept, tramped on their own, whistling the airs of fair Provence. Their unready muscles and wind-dispersed clothes were to swing along the sea of wine bushes. From the eminence near the city they had beheld with joy the thousands of hectares of one crop only, the sun-sickened grapes ready to spew their juices into waiting vats.

The public way down to the Plateau was crowded with disdainful jet-black eyes, as proud as those of idle Romans gathered to see a new batch of Gothic or Macedonian captives. The occasional estate agent, the omnipresent insurance solicitor, the bubbling lottery-ticket sales barker, gathered under the secular plane trees. It was the review of unashamed poverty by poverty glossed. The *gavaches* marched on, merry, unmindful, well herded.

Grandiose Denys Renouvier, fat king of the Aspiran grape fields, red-cheeked as Bacchus, paunchy as a Chinese idol, roared at the waves of human poverty come to beat against the fields of Languedoc. He had arranged with the *paire* Robert Puech and his wife *la maire* Madeleine (she whose moustaches exceeded her husband's and whose rapacity roughened her voice) to deliver the helpless men for a few sous and for two litres of ordinary wine a day. He appraised the convoy carefully. It was a selected breed, better than usual, and sturdy enough for sustained work. Renouvier counted the men, and then paid the two patrons. They distributed some small change to their camp following. It was a convenient system for the hirer, but deadly for his victims.

"There they are, M. Renouvier," Puech said. He saluted the capitalist. Both squatted behind two large glasses of Izarra on the terrace of the chromium-decorated Café de la Comédie. "They are ready to work from sunrise to sunset, no Sundays off, a franc and two litres the price. I have done well this year but you have done better, M. Renouvier. My *maire* still nags me. She tells me I am like a gull of the ancient priests who brought them sweet women for nothing in their spring orgies. But I answer her that I esteem your custom, an honour for me, M. Renouvier."

The poor were rejoiced, despite the oncoming slavery. They

pointed like children to the brilliant cafés. The desert rocks of the Cévennes were nurseries of heroism but of indescribable boredom as well. The release of life was translated by long ditties, monotonous but stoutly continuous. The homesickness for their mountains would soon return. Among them were few, indeed, who were to become the lees in the brimming cup of Languedoc.

The *gavaches* camped near the gasworks on the Canal in the lowest part of the city, under the shadow of the immense citadel walls. There they were watched intently by the trained vineyard workers, slum dwellers of the old town.

The town labourers were better paid. They knew the wine as these barbarians did not. Every bush told them of its idiosyncrasy. They knew every plant as a mother knows each one of her progeny, that are but a brood to all others. The town labourers knew when and how to cull, what to bring first to the presses, what to commingle for a good bush. The quality of their work was an important factor in the wine-growers' profit. To know soil, moisture, slope, to make sure that the vines trapped the utmost in sunlight, to spray the vines cunningly, to watch them fan out evenly over the furrows, this was the ceaseless travail required that the connoisseur in some distant land might knowingly smack his lips.

Unionized and articulate, socialist and communist nearly to a man, militantly anti-clerical, they were as drunk with discontents as they were solid in attainments. They looked upon the nomads who helped them with the natural scorn of advanced workmen. A few agitators here and there had urged the claims of solidarity with these casuals, but they were as yet unheeded and the employers profited handily by the caste division within the working class.

The head and front of the Employers' Association was the rubicund Denys Renouvier. His home on the Avenue du Président-Wilson was the gathering place of estate owners and wine dealers. In the evening he sat in his grand dining-room, with oak Louis XIV furniture, as solid as his soul, surrounding him. He easily held authority over men worth less than his fifty million francs. He had stately pictures ponderously framed, by Bouguereau, showing recumbent fleshy dames, stately pictures by Cabanel, showing recumbent fleshy dames, and stately pictures by Félix Ziem of couchant carmine-spattering Venice sunsets. It was what it ought to be.

That night he toasted the *pairs*—Puech and his lady, the bearded Madeleine. His servant, Isidore, his butler, Firmin, his first maid-

servant, Lucille, were scurrying about offering *petits fours* and coffee to all and sundry. They drank wines of other regions, those that held a true bouquet. So the employers' committee and the slave, driving labour contractors made merry and ratified their season contracts.

In this way there was delivered to the fields the labour power of eighty-five thousand men and women. Next day the fields hummed. Within a week they were alive with song and sweat. The free skylarks were to mount high, their song liquid, while the people below uttered a warm universal drone.

When the guests had departed, Denys summoned his family for another round of drinks. The mingled sweet herbs and flowers and varied honey bases of local liqueurs better fitted family harmony. He boasted of his trading with his oft-repeated vigour on that delightful subject. He waited happily for the children's inevitable, "*Mais, oui, mon père,*" or the eternal, "*Tu as raison, cher ami,*" from his wife.

They believed in him. Papa owned the fine fields to the west of the city on the road to limestone-throned Narbonne. Mamma, formerly Marie-Anne Duhamel, of Norman extraction but Southern investment, had brought a dowry of sixty prodigious vats. Their ponderous love play had produced three sons and two daughters.

The oldest son, François, twenty-four, graduate of the École de Droit at Paris, was a fat snob, an aggressive royalist, an assaulter of the poor, a ceaseless talker. The second, a year his junior, Jacques, was a wanton, lecher, gambler, but socially goodhearted. He also was fat but constant exercise in pursuit of love had slendered his shanks and thinned his hips. The third son, Foulques, was a fighting fellow, referee at amateur boxing contests, a squash player, wore what he thought was London clothing, harboured no thought in his thin pate, but wished no harm to man or beast. François despised the two because they minded their own business and would give neither a centime nor a minute to restore the moribund Bourbons.

The daughters, gathered about the feet of their papa, were sitting on cushions on the floor with an air consciously copied from the widespread reproductions of Winterhalter's canvas of the Empress Eugénie and her ladies. They were self-conscious in everything but in their native love of fun. That, inherited from their corpulent, gay parents, was too much for the enamel, and the native stuff broke through.

The elder, twenty-one, Gisèle, was gipsy dark, her hair glossy

black; her dimpled cheeks seemed always ready for the next smile. Her dowry was two million francs, her inheritance ten million. The younger, Cécile, seventeen, pert, witty, and admittedly saucy to poor and rich alike, was a hummingbird, all littleness, colour, speed, malice, fineness. Her small frame spun about in this world; she kept moving on inner principle. She worshipped her father because he laughed so much. Her dark cheeks moved with his, her streaked brown hair seemed to flow like a smiling brook when she was amused.

No one could have guessed that this family, devoted, except for François, to pleasure, were of the severe Protestant stock of the South of France. But they were and were kind even to the strict family of their miserably poor cousins, the Sabatiers, who lived behind their grocer's shop in the near-by Rue Victor-Hugo.

Not that the Renouviers had recently seen the inside of a Huguenot temple. There was no fun in that. The Sabatiers, as Madame Marie-Anne Duhamel reflected, had enough surplus piety to carry the Renouviers along with them on their capacious Christian raft. The rich family expected to attain heaven by proxy.

Talk about the poor family closest to a rich family always begins with obligatory sympathy. The fate of Mme Sabatier was the subject of the hundredth compassionate speech on the part of Mamma Renouvier, and as soon as the platitudes died away, led to chatter by the two girls about the two Sabatier boys. It was an old theme, for Onésime, the younger of the sons of Mme Sabatier, had pursued Cécile with the eye of love since both were children. At the age of eight she had gone through a very solemn service of mock marriage with him (he being twelve), and there could be no turning back from that vow, so he thought. She recalled this, and set the family roaring at sallies that they had heard so often and liked so much.

Gisèle was silent, grim. The older brother of Onésime, Stéphane Sabatier, had told her that the rich do not marry the poor and as a good merchant he never wasted time on a trade reserved for competitors with more capital. The Renouvier family respected its realist cousin, and Denys Renouvier looked knowingly at his three sons while he praised Stéphane's industry in the vineyards and his energy in selling the wine of the little firm he represented, on market days.

The family party broke up at midnight, the three brothers standing up like men of the world and bowing their sisters to the staircase, the mother putting out her hand to be kissed by

her three darlings, the father who looked upon himself as the brilliant source of five fools, smiling indulgently at his collection of harmless mistakes.

Upstairs the girls yawned, stretched, undressed slowly. They were in a mood to exchange only the confidences that told no more than what they had given each other before.

"Gisèle, Gisèle," laughed Cécile, "the idea of marrying Onésime!" She laughed again and drawled, "O, Lord, we are Thy people, the carriers of Thy grace." The thought of Protestant piety tickled her; she went through a mock rigmarole.

She fingered a bottle of perfume, opened it and breathed its heavy fat odour, and then took up the almond spermaceti soap of Guerlain, which she turned round and round in her palm. That sweaty boy from the vineyards her husband! "At the same time, Gisèle, he *is* the best-looking fellow in this miserable Béziers. Dull, provincial Béziers, I hate it," she got up and declaimed to the mirror like a very bad actress. She slammed a cushion. "Gisèle, get Papa to send us to Cannes. Oh, why do I ask you? You sit and absorb and wait and sit again and hear the names of all the boys that want our dowries. You haven't an ounce of go in you, but you'll bury me, you life-conserving machine."

Cécile pelted her unanswering sister with a satin slipper but the other pretended sleep and held her eyes closed under a barrage of pillows, girdles, combs and brushes. Gisèle held her own. She never budged. She followed her game which was never to follow that of her younger sister.

In the morning, Marie-Anne Renouvier went to the shop of the widow Sabatier and ordered salsify, artichokes, egg-plants, leek, garlic, ginger and mace, as well as mint and verbenas leaves for tea. She could not hint the ineligibility of the widow's sons as husbands, for every time the *grande dame* opened her mouth a housewife came in and chattered about the weakness of the franc, the rise in the cost of living, the responsibility of some politician or other. Madame left, the subject undiscussed.

That night, Stéphane and Onésime Sabatier came home from the vineyards after ten hours' toil. Onésime had been his brother's butt from the nipple onwards. Now that they were twenty-three and twenty-one respectively, it was not so bad, but Stéphane still commanded. Their father had been dead so long that he was recalled only like the men that were before Agamemnon. The boys did not

remember the neatly trimmed beard and the still more neatly trimmed thinking of their terrestrial author.

He had been pastor of the Evangelical church at Pézenas, ten miles away. There he had preached the ever-living word of God in that city of the dead. The frightening high stones darken the passer-by's heart; the streets of shadowed spleen contradict his light steps. The Huguenots in that town of wraiths heard with clamant joy their pastor unfurl the four centuries of persecution. They gloated in their onetime sorrows with the thoroughness of sound men of business. Both boys had inherited a serious cast from the pastor.

Upon his death, the widow was aided by the rich Renouviers to open a scratch grocery business in sinful Béziers. She hesitated to move to the city of casinos and brothels, but finally consented as otherwise she could not support her boys. Above the windows of her shop, on her red awning was inscribed:

MME VEUVE SABATIER

FINE SPICES AND CHOICE COLONIAL PRODUCE

It covered a pauper's stock of goods. The Renouviers had tried to give further help but their aid was refused. Mme Sabatier was downright: "Once I have been helped, my character must do the rest. Who has once borrowed has tasted beggary once too often." The long-nosed widow went her own hard way, as rigorous as a thesis by John Calvin.

The shop was entered by a narrow door. It was a small room, ten feet wide and twenty deep, smelling of arachis oil. The apartment behind consisted of a kitchen (where the mother slept) and a dark alcove (where the boys slept). In this shop the Sabatiers had assaulted the fastness of life and fallen into the moat.

The boys had had to leave the *lycée*, despite the brilliance of Stéphane and the proficiency of Onésime. The faithful would not assist them to continue their studies. The two lads were not church-goers and spoke a normal French instead of the Bible-stuffed speech of the Huguenots. As their miseries increased, her Protestant friends told the widow that God was punishing her for allowing her sons to mock Him on his favourite beat, the South of France. They compared their conduct to that of the sons of Eli. The Renouviers, on the other hand, being lost in gaiety, knew nothing of the thoughts of the boys. For them seriousness was merely an evidence of religion.



The lads became field workers. They were apprenticed to the sweet-wine growers of Lunel, to the muscat-grape pressers of Frontignan. They attended night courses in viticulture, in fact they became masters of the whole range of oenology. They were soon superlative workmen, held back only by their youth. Denys Renouvier loved them for that. He respected them more than his sons, whom he could not take seriously and about whom he had no illusions. Wine was his life. It was rumoured about town that the Sabatier boys would soon be made his foremen, and not merely by reason of kinship.

The brothers clicked into the shop in their sabots and sailed on these wooden boats into the living-room. They left their clogs, like faithful Moslems, at the door. They put on rag sandals. Stéphane was ashamed of them, ashamed also of his worker's blue blouse. Onésime, however, never expected to wear anything else except for Sundays. The smell of Mother's bacon soup, the messy salted bacon swimming in a tureen of fat, strewn also with old bread, brought the hungry field workers to the table unwashed.

"Get up and wash yourselves thoroughly," rang Mother's order, the five thousandth or more in a lifetime. "Nape, back of the ears, inside the ears, and scrub your wrists as well." (Details too, and at their age.) The boys came back smelling of seventy-two-degree Marseille soap, used for washing clothes and incidentally their less costly skin. The smell of the scrubbing soap on the floor, the Marseille soap on the brothers, and the lard soup gave the humble kitchen a savour of the bouquet of fats.

"Stéphane, it is your turn to say grace."

"Madame, my mother, in all respect, must I argue about this every night? You know I don't believe. There is no God. I can't ask favours of No One. It's absurd."

This quaint, stilted, ritual speech was expected.

"I shall say it then," the long-nosed mother snapped. "Hear, O Lord, who has carried Thy saints through centuries of sorrow in this popish land, carry my sons too, beyond the shoals of doubt. May we eat our bread in thanks to the Son of Man who had nowhere to rest His head." She looked straight. "Say Amen."

"Amen," they echoed, as they wolfed the soup with their eyes. They dared not dash for it, for Mother loved an honourable pause after grace.

"How was the work to-day?" she inquired as they engulfed the soup.

"Not bad, Mother," Onésime replied, "but the crop is too fine and too abundant. To-day the buyers paid only 1.75 francs for red wine and imagine, only 1.90 for white. Imagine that. For a litre of good nine-degree wine too."

These were not merely quotations at Béziers, they were the life of every family. Eagerly Onésime expanded, "It's the Algerian wine that's sucking our lifeblood. The sidis work for five francs a day. We're finished. But what do they care in Paris. They talk colonies, colonies. That's big money for them. We can die here for all they care. They take our people away to die fighting in the colonies. Why? So that the Paris leeches can cultivate wine cheap. Then they kill us at home by taking our jobs away. You know what they'll do next?" He was glowing. "They'll have those black savages come down and drown us in a rain of bullets if we kick. That's what the *Lumière* said this morning." Stéphane drummed his fork.

"Come, come, keep your speeches for your election to the Chamber of Deputies. It gets us nowhere. Heats our blood to no good." Stéphane was bound to reduce his brother, with whom he, nevertheless, was entirely agreed.

"Let the youngster speak his mind," the mother ordered. "You know a Northern Frenchman is no Frenchman. He is a German who speaks our language. *Canaille*," she spat.

Onésime went on, encouraged. "They make you sick up there with their insults. The South is lazy, talkative, over-represented, undertaxed. Paris, their everlasting Paris, is France."

Mother added to the Hymn of Hate. "That Babylon, that haunt of perdition. Our France, land of the family, insulted everywhere because of that foul city. We are all wicked, they think. Because of that wart on our fair face." That speech came on every time Paris was mentioned. Professor Pavlov would have delighted in the reflex response.

Stéphane changed the subject. "Has cousin Denys spoken of taking us on? No? They're fantastic snobs, that alleged family of ours."

"Eat, foolish starlings, eat well," Mother urged, "you've deserved it."

"Deserved it, yes, but where does it lead?" Onésime's callow

voice wavered. "Every spare minute I can get I try to be more than a peasant, that's all we are, peasants. Don't gild the word. That's why Cécile won't marry me. Put me in American clothes and give me a good income and she'd be glad to. I am going to borrow two thousand francs from the Renouviers. With that I can go to the Beaux-Arts at Montpellier. It's cheaper than Paris and near home and they tell me it's even better for a beginner. I have a talent for painting. I must develop it. Don't laugh, Stéphane. Your only object in life is to make me ridiculous. 'Brother mole, keep your eye on the sod!' That's what you're always saying to me, however you put it."

"Nonsense," Stéphane criticized. "Why is your painting an impression of a tree on a cloth with dry colours and some oil so mighty important? Why does it make you better than a good wine gatherer? Yes, if you're a genius, or show a sign of genius. But you're a sentimentalist, my boy. You never stick at anything. I've had to flog you to keep you at wine studies. You want quick success. You'll sicken of painting, too, when you have to go through dull years of learning. Just you see."

"I want to be free, lord of my own person."

"Stop that inflated talk. You don't want Cécile to marry a worker so you think she'll be proud of an artist."

"Don't mention Cécile that way."

Mother interrupted. "It's time for the *finest-herbes* omelet. It's just off the stove. You warriors will have to cool your tongues to eat it." Eating resolves many quarrels. It did this one.

That night, for the tenth time, Onésime determined to run away. The bickering of an older brother, the authority of a mother built on a formula, the defeat of his aims, must be beaten. The recurring cowardly thought of depending on his rich relatives showed how weak he had become.

He was listlessly turning a paints catalogue, under a feeble bulb, when Stéphane interrupted his morbid reveries. "Onésime, we are alone, not putting up our old fight before Mother. I want to speak seriously to you."

"No one asked for your damned advice."

"No, and no one will listen to it either. I'm speaking to myself." Stéphane cleared his throat like an orator. He took up several canvases he had painted in his spare time in the evenings and went on. "The teachers praised me to the skies but they forgot Onésime."

That's because they're blind to talent. That's the reason my brother wants to paint, that he was always thought to be less gifted than I. That's why I've sense enough to rise in my own trade. I want to marry Gisèle. I know what she wants, a business success. You want to marry Cécile. You are full of mooncalf dreams as to what she wants. You wish yourself wrapped in a poetic package and delivered to her heart. What a swindler! Never sure of any emotion unless you colour it."

"You are speaking to me. You agreed you wouldn't."

"Pardon me, Monsieur," Stéphane said pompously.

Onésime looked at Stéphane with good brotherly hatred. "I'm wild about everything, Cécile, art, life itself. You're cool about Gisèle and your painting. You don't feel it. That's not art. All right then, your finish is better than mine. That's nothing. What counts is the vision and I've got that."

"You're a weakling and a sham," said Stéphane abruptly. "I watch my step. Renouvier never made his money by being a softie or a fool. If I go to him half-cocked I'm through for good. Take my advice. Don't annoy Cécile. She welcomes the chance of a dramatic flare-up; even though she loves you. Wait until we're in the business. Wait, boy, wait."

"Not for a minute," Onésime yelled at his oversane brother, "I have waited day and night for her since we were kids. You know I haven't slept soundly for five years for thinking about her. I can't and won't stand it."

"My poor brother," Stéphane was moved, "how you must love her! But my advice is still good. Give it a thought."

"Thought kills everything, only action counts."

"All right, go ahead."

*A Rich Young Lady Laughs*

ONÉSIME did not run away. That night, at nine, he stepped into the Allées Paul-Riquet. The usual intense crowd was trebled by the sight-seeing mountaineers. He smiled at their intense enthusiasm for Béziers, their warm pleasure at the electric lights, their gathering spellbound about radio broadcasting shops, their envious but admiring glances directed at slicked-haired consumers of liqueurs and coffees and occasional beers on the overlighted café terraces. They swayed to unknown jazz rhythms, thumped fearfully by the searching fingers of French players, trained to an older accidence. The night was sultry, intensely hot. It was the depth of August both by calendar and behaviour. A faint wind came up from the wayward sea and fell suffocated.

He found himself, as by election, at the Renouvier mansion. The servants had instructions to admit him at all times, however he was dressed. Onésime was clothed in corduroy, with a small black bérêt and a flowing tie. He might be a huntsman or an aggressive Bohemian.

"I won't let her see me as a working man," he satisfied himself. "She won't be able to say I dress poorly so as to deepen the contrast between us. No tricks."

Cécile's parents were away, holding court at their café. They secretly hated the pomp of their home and loved to flourish in the democratic atmosphere of the coffeehouse, where social standing is clearly measured by piled-up saucers. Denys's saucers rarely added up to less than twenty-five francs, a riotous sum for Béziers.

Cécile was at home hiding behind mosquito netting. She almost always lay in an airless salon, dreading the wind that brought insects to her hospitable skin. Whether they loved her oils or were intoxicated by her agreeable blood, they all concentrated on her, even in a large company, and hovered about ready to puncture. It was her terror. At such moments she read eagerly the advertisements about trips to

Spitzbergen or Archangel or North Cape. At such times, too, her impudence was limited.

She received Onésime while in her dressing-gown. Firmin noted it at once as parental spy.

"Why are you here on this hot night, dear cousin?" she began softly.

"I had to speak to you to-night," he said, the words rushing along. "If I don't I won't be able to work up enough courage again.

"Cécile, I've made up my mind. I'm going to Montpellier, to the Beaux-Arts. Cécile, stand by me, live with me. With you I can go through with poverty, anything. Without you, I don't know. Years of study and poverty, who can tell? Have pity, Cécile. I know you love me, don't pretend. Leave this house, dear. What can you buy with all your money? If my hat was sodden with rain, Cécile, and my coat gone, I would be better than the best-dressed fellow you could get, for I am your lover. You know it. You laugh too much in this house. You don't want to know what misery it takes to make you rich. You're a woman, Cécile, you too must suffer. Come, share my miseries. Come, Cécile."

Cécile felt she ought to laugh. She let her embarrassment run off into spite. She said hurriedly, "Well, dear cousin, you want to suffer? Do so. Why with me? Onésime, I'm indifferent to all your old tangles. They bore me, just bore me."

He watched her behind the mosquito net, veiled from every bite, that of love too. He knew it was a tantrum, but to-night he was bitter and wounded.

"Cécile," he pleaded, "all day long I work in the fields like a rat, at night I toss in dreams like a poet." She drooped her lids to disguise her sympathy. "So, I bore you. I'd rather be dead than bore you. Dead, dead. I'll dream forever and I'll gloat when I see your remorse." He looked wild. "Perhaps I'll take you with me. Yes, that's it."

Cécile had never known him so excited, so extravagant in threats. She was simple. "Onésime, leave. Get out of this room. I know what you want. The night is hot and you are young and strong. What you call your soul," she laughed, "well, I've that soul too. I don't sleep, and I'm no poet. Why do you threaten me? Who asks you into my life? Don't talk pistols and vitriol. I'm not afraid of you. And don't tell me you won't take my money!" She

screamed at him; she needed to quarrel. "You boast of that virtue till I'm sick of you. I want someone that is hungry for my money. He'll never get it, our lawyer will make sure of that. But let him lust after it. When he holds my breasts let him feel for my purse! I want all his desires mixed; I can run him like a puppy when he is confused. God save me from an honest fanatic like you! Get out with that face. I can't stand it. You are a callow madman. They taught you to worship God and adore a good woman. I want a man with sense with whom I can have a damned good time. I'm entitled to it. I'm rich."

Onésime, transfixed, was overcome by sorrow. Her speech was too hard for her heart and how well he knew that heart! She was flying from herself because she was unsure and proud. He made no answer and walked out slowly.

He wandered out into the suburbs, through the gipsy camp. He strayed as a lost sheep among these shepherds from the bleak lands of Lozère. He pulled at his *béret* many times, stamped his feet, ran his hands in and out of his pockets, looked up at the hide-and-seek moon, dodged shadows, went about the streets mumbling to himself and winning arguments with his straw opponents, and sagaciously decided that he was too little for his part in life.

"I too think I have tasted tragedy, I, an obscure wine worker. I too have the effrontery to think myself an artist; I who have yet to make a fine charcoal sketch, even one as good as Stéphane's. How high my vanity, how low my worth."

The French epigram sat on a Protestant conscience. It was the subtle ratification of what he felt was believed by his adored Cécile.

He came into the Rue Victor-Hugo where his mother sat outside her shop talking to the assembled housewives of the street trying to conjure away the oppressive heat by long, lazy, anecdotal talk. Over the way was the discreet house of ill fame. Its stencil-cut house numbers came through a blue gaslight. Onésime, who had demanded all from a woman, was sickened by the degradation of the sex. His disappointment turned into horror. He rushed past his mother, through the shop and flat, and into the backyard where he was sure he would faint, but where he only paced nervously, and still further wore out the weedy, patchy, disconsolate lawn, and then, stupidly, he hit his head against the wall until his skull rang. He slept an unquiet sleep in which Cécile spoke viciously to him,

then rolled him into a ball of yarn, span him out, and at last twisted him about her fingers. He woke up screaming.

Cécile slept indifferently at first, then turned into a cascade of tears. "I could kick myself for speaking to him that way," she exclaimed aloud. "Why did I sneer at him, scold him, degrade him? Wretched girl. Onésime, the one boy I love, the one hope I have."

She fingered a circular of the P.L.M. railway with gaudy coloured reproductions of the gay resorts from Saint-Tropez to Menton. The life of these rich snob resorts soon consoled her: it was a natural solace to her perennially gay spirit. The hummingbird thought she had forgotten her insulted and injured lover. Her small body fell into a deep sleep, in which the evening's outburst was buried five fathoms. At that moment, in the narrow bed behind the grocer's shop, Onésime was murmuring, "I've got to leave this place in the morning;" and he kept on instructing himself, "watch for the first sign of dawn and be off. Don't let the day catch you off guard."



*Onésime Studies Art and Nature*

At four in the morning, Onésime awoke. He put his few clothes into a blue paper valise and slid out of the house. The dramatic boy left no note for Mother or Stéphane: he was to be as one dead. He boarded the first bus for Montpellier, fifty miles away. It was full of Italian workers, returning from a construction job at Carcassonne. They were dispersed over the seats trying to find out in how many possible uncomfortable positions man can still find a sound sleep. He wedged himself among the snorers. He watched the thin blue light rise over the remote towers of the many lost towns along the route. The Carthaginian Étang de Thau opened before him, a salt lagoon, gigantic, stagnant, hot, ancient with chalk-coloured houses huddled stickily on uncertain slopes. Bare hills and rock-strewn valleys, over which floated magic carpets of dandelions and marigolds, streaked past the hurrying bus "*lou camel*" anxious to deposit its thirsty driver in front of a friendly bar at the terminus. The morning's allowance of bitter black coffee in which marc liqueur is infused was his necessity.

At six-thirty the bus rollicked into the market place at Montpellier. The Italians woke up as by a signal and stepped forcefully into a sea of tomatoes, pears, raspberries, *mortadelles*, and snails and sea urchins. With them came the dazed Onésime, now realizing that his adventure had begun.

He climbed the street beside the long opera house to the curious lichen-covered fountain of the three Graces in the Place de la Comédie. He walked slowly, holding on to his poor paper valise with a rural grip, and at last sat down, exhausted, in the Esplanade, in the shade of a senile, droopy plane tree. The city was so ordered compared to Béziers and so elegant! The dead city, his fellow *Biterrois* called it, but it seemed his town. It was chaste, aristocratic, classic; it had the frozen perfection of an unhurried people given to surplus income-nourished contemplation.

He lifted his tired eyelids and saw before him the Musée Fabre,

the Library and the School of Fine Arts. There were five francs in his pocket. Ahead of him was the object of his ambitions, but where were his means? What demon told him to come to Montpellier, which had everything and in which he could do nothing? Cécile, his "eternal beloved," came before him and smoothed the drooping eyelids, and so he slept like any good tramp. He was out of the world as with the monk who heard the nightingale for a second and found a hundred years were gone in listening to that delicious song. Onésime slept five minutes and swore it was eternity. He was perfectly rested.

There was nothing to it but to seek work in the fields. Adieu, dreams. It was the same work as at home but more welcome. A well-organized skilled man, he knew work was to be sought in the labour bureau at the *préfecture*. It was now seven in the morning and he crawled unwillingly up the long lanes through high walls in the ancient town. At the labour exchange he showed his credentials as a trained viticulturist. It was the height of the season and there was a serious shortage of skilled labour. He was sent to the experimental station of the school of agriculture, just outside the city gates. He crossed to the post office and sent a post card to his mother but gave no address. The remaining few francs were spent on breakfast, after which, penniless, he walked to the School of Agriculture and arrived footsore.

His chief was to be Professor Désiré Chardonroux. Onésime came into his room, trembling, for the porter outside had drawn a portrait of the professor's soul that would have depressed the bravest man. Onésime saw a full square-bearded man wearing an Émile Zola pince-nez with a long black cord, cloth and patent-leather shoes, fusty white vest, a cracked straw boater. He had stepped out of a 1900 caricature of the learned professions. A lunatic on viticulture, he was esteemed the testiest man in choleric France. On the wall, facing the visitor, was the following inscription, printed in extremely large lettering:

### NOTICE TO VISITORS

In order to spare my choleric temper which my medical advisers assure me will shorten my useful days, a list of subjects that anger me is appended. In order to prevent fulsome flattery from ambitious students who seek to pander to my prejudices, I also

append a list of my preferences, none of which must ever be praised.

### I HATE

GERMANS They wounded me in the War	their milk-and-water urine has no rich, heavy odour
WOMEN They have no taste for fine wine	PASTEUR Everyone says how inferior I am to him—I worship Béchamp whose ideas he stole and twisted
WATER DRINKERS They seek health before joy and exquisiteness	THE FUTURE I am sick of Idealists and Meliorists
CHRISTIANS They are foes of science (Mendel grudgingly accepted)	THE PAST I despise romantics
CHILDREN Unimaginative, cruel,	MONEY No one gets it anyway, and as a viticulturist I hate sour grapes

### I LOVE

<i>Good Wine</i>	<i>Bright students</i>
<i>Fine Food</i>	<i>Hatred as a fine art</i>
<i>Henry D. Thoreau (American)</i>	<i>Prize fighting</i>
<i>THE PRESENT</i>	<i>Celery Braisé</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>Women (who clean pots and have immense behinds and contradict you in a raw broom-swing voice)</i>
<i>Makers of fine laboratory instruments (including Germans)</i>	

The professor turned his swivel chair, looked straight at the workman, and fired technical questions, staccato, at this juvenile applicant for a foreman's post. He showed eyebrow-lifting surprise that every trick question on the care of wines was answered with ingenuity and thoroughness. He rubbed his hands and commended the young man. He wrote out an employment note for him to present to the college bursar and then asked personal questions.

"Parents, living?"

- "My father, a pastor, dead, mother, grocer, survives."

"As always. Six widows to one widower. Figures. Because the ladies are so unjustly done by. If they were justly done by there wouldn't be any widowers. Don't mind me, I'm crazy."

"I would say I liked you, Monsieur, if liking were not prohibited by your list."

"Is that on the list?" He peered at it with amused near-sighted concentration. "No, my friend, you are permitted to praise me personally. There is no evidence that I am on the list of subjects I like." He cleared the air with a sweep of his arms. "But be careful you do not praise my colleague, Professor Sahutel. He is a genius on the maladies of the silkworm and the woes of the mulberry bush. But he walked out of the Academy of Sciences as anti-scientific because they praised him instead of the chromosomes which were really what made him smart."

He wiped his eyeglasses with a foul handkerchief. "Your mind is wandering. You are secretly listening to someone else. *Ergo*, you are in love and I love young fellows in love. They are radiantly foolish and often work hard. Lovers make good gardeners and sometimes good sextons. Good-bye, my boy."

Onésime had enjoyed himself. In a few days he became normal. He was pleasantly lodged in a studio garret near the greenhouses. He found that the mad professor was not mad at all but merely a deflected vaudevillist surviving in a savant. He was a most stimulating chief. He lamented the absence of fine wines in Languedoc and worked ingeniously at improving the breed of grapes until they approximated to Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Especially did he think this possible near river banks. His fresh, wise, wandering eye perceived qualities in grapes that Onésime had never suspected. He soon realized that under Professor Chardonnoeux he might become the most skilful vintner in the region. So while he cherished memories of Cécile, the sanity of his work transmuted his sorrow and made him whole.

One day, Professor Sahutel, a pudgy-nosed, bad-skinned dwarf was walking through the experimental plantings with Chardonnoeux. He looked at Onésime and asked, "Are you related to the Pastor Sabatier of Pézenas?"

"His younger son, *M. le Professeur*."

"I knew your father well, you are his dead spit. Are you happy here? For your father was a man of books and knew painfully little about anything outside of printer's ink and heaven."

"Of course he's happy here," Chardonnoeux chirped. "See here, my dear colleague, Onésime is the best workman we have ever

'had here. Don't mess up my treasure chest. But you are a spider given to spinning flossy crimes."

"If I may be permitted to speak for myself," Onésime said, "I may say I came to Montpellier to study at the Beaux-Arts but I had to look for work for I was without a sou, literally."

"Study you should if you wish to," Sahutel agreed. "Chardonoux, why don't you find out something about people you employ? What sort of a *citizen* are you? We ought to find out if courses at the Beaux-Arts can be arranged for, without interfering with his work. We might help him to a part scholarship if we put in our oars. I always try, at least. He might be a failure at art and come back all the better as a wine foreman. He might be a true artist. In that case the grapes will have to be less expertly taken care of. I am right, colleague?"

Chardonoux at first was annoyed. He said, "Stick to your last, Sahutel." But soon he took Onésime's ear and pulled it fatherwise. "I suspected there was something thin in your nature, for, the first time I saw you I knew you were in love. Why didn't you tell me you preferred plane fruits to solid ones? Be an artist then and raise a family later. On pretty poor rations. Perhaps I shall help you at the Beaux-Arts, but later, later. Wait until the gathering is over."

Winter is grey anyway, thought Onésime, I can smear its surface with paints.

Onésime had fallen among friends. He picked up courage and wrote a long letter to his family to relieve their anxieties (but gave no address), with the fond hope the news would reach Cécile. He was too proud to write her direct. His family inquired after him but the police would give them no clue: he was of age and wanted for no offence. The worries of mothers are not their business, for the regulations do not mention them. He was questioned for his military service. This he had performed properly, so there was no more they could do. Mme Sabatier came to Montpellier but failed to find him. She appealed to Denys Renouvier whose labour-spy service soon traced him. But Denys blandly informed everyone but his wife and François that he was unsuccessful.

The gathering of the grapes was soon over. Before the *gavaches* departed for the mountains a popular festival was given on the elevated gardens of Montpellier, the famed Peyrou. Every town in the wine country celebrated the Bacchic harvest, but among them all, academic Montpellier was to a proverb for its elegance. Onésime

attended with his group of casual workers, twenty in all. Ten thousand were present. It was a warm October night, almost summery. The crescent moon stood at attention, drawing its thin silver bow. It was seen through the ultramarine sky, as an inset within the Greek water tower on the promenade overlooking the circle of mountains to the north.

Here was the classic antiquity, the deftly arranged quincunxes behind the perfect Arch of Triumph and the statue of Louis XIV decked as a Roman emperor, the neatly planted flower gardens as a well-ordered palette, two large basins of water in correctly measured oblongs balancing each other before the circular stone stairs. Coloured lights were strung along the trees and on the mile-long aqueduct.

In the gardens the children danced Aragonese rounds to the republican Hymn of Riego, with the curious short-legged stump movements of six-year-olds. A Provençal poet told long humorous tales in the local language and recited over-gallant poetry in the Montpellier dialect; the populace was wild with delight but the French from other regions were baffled. A pianist rendered the salon enthusiasms of Chopin on a stringy 1890 Pleyel piano but the twangy sighs of the Polish swan were not to the taste of the folk. A violinist inflicted the scholastic cadences and chunky double-stops of Wieniawski, De Bériot, and Sarasate on unwilling ears.

The wines procession followed, led by Professor Chardonnoux and the mayor of the city, himself a professor of botany. The university faculty gathered in their rich-coloured hoods to the delight of the peasantry. Then the people had their chance and improved on the occasion.

Here was the Areopagus of a small city. On it was brought together the people of its jurisdiction, there men were fulfilled as citizens. It was democracy made flesh and movement. The student of Latin paradigms and he who knew only the flight of the swallow, the village drunk with his thick speech and the teacher of elocution, all were in the arms of their mother, the city.

The little flute and drum bands struck up. They were made up of men in white shirts and trousers with red bands, and wearing red bérêts. The dances of the South of France sprang to life: those known to every music student by the frequency with which they were taken as models by Bach and Couperin, Rameau and Haydn. The peasants turned in *ritournelles*, a mad Miriam danced the tambourin, farmers from the arid plain of Albi pranced in their *bourrées*; gavotte,

minuet, *passe-pied*, farandole were seen and heard in their unrefined states.

Large choruses took up *Les filles de la Rochelle* among folk songs, *Madelon* from the sentimental war veterans, and the youngsters responded with *Une Nuit à Monte Carlo* and other cinema hits. Italian and Spanish tenant farmers and hobo labourers added their local songs and their concourse of guitars and mandolins. A gust of applause greeted the immigrants, so often detested as competitors for jobs. But the Dionysiac excitements of the poor were over at eleven o'clock. Poverty made them incapable of too great an effort. The intensity of the evening was not founded on sufficient food. Their enjoyments were as circumscribed as their diet.

Onésime was fascinated and noted nothing of their poverty. He was swept away by the colour of the evening, the multi-voiced men, the fat hips of the girls, the concord of placid deep sky, harmonious architecture, luscious gardens, and the fleeting joys of his fellows.

He strolled back to the glasshouses by way of the Cézanne walls overhung with shy evergreens, along the exquisitely named *Chemin de la Portalière des Masques*. He slept well in this pleasant city so remote from the agitations of Béziers.

He fingered his sketches of which he thought so much. Professor Sahutel, with a thirty-year-old uncomely daughter to marry off, frequently visited him. He was an admirer of Cézanne and extended his partiality to poor imitations. So he encouraged Onésime.

The season over, he was at last inscribed at the Beaux-Arts. He rose at five and in the chilly dark preceding dawn laboured in the greenhouses until ten in the morning. Dry bread sustained him. At ten he went to morning classes for two hours, eagerly trying to rival the fresh efforts of youngsters who had just got up. He was allowed, fortunately, two hours for lunch, the usual fare of onion soup and gobs of drowned bread. It gave him strength to work in Chardon-noux' beloved glass conservatories until five. The ambitious lad did not falter. He attended classes until nightfall and at eight tucked himself to bed on a half litre of wine, a glass of milk, and bread. His diet was poor, his striving intense, but his work, alas, was mediocre. His constant enthusiasm and refusal to accept defeat finally gave his crayon sketches a sincere plausibility. His professors came to respect his character more than his talents.

One wet November night as he came out of school his arm was tugged by someone behind him. It was Cécile! She looked wan

and even more petite than usual. The hummingbird could not tolerate damp cold. She belted her plaid mackintosh tight about her.

"Onésime dear, I have spent months looking for you. Oh, are you glad to see me?" She sounded timid.

Onésime stammered. "So glad, Cécile."

She had to hurry to explain, "I know why you left, darling. I lied to you when I insulted you so grossly, so needlessly. I have been in Montpellier ten times since. I love you and I gave you pain. I looked for you everywhere, but you never go anywhere. This is the third night I have waited here on the off-chance. I had begun to despair and here you are, dear." She clutched closer to his arm. "Speak to me, my friend, you are glad to see me?"

He tried to hold her close and show his love but his words were clumsy. "You didn't really mean to hurt me then? I am so glad."

Cécile held back. "No, no, I was proud, resented threats. You shouldn't threaten me, no matter what you feel." She looked up at him. "Oh, my heart is bounding, I am with you again!" They trudged through the steady rain, in the old city, over the cobbled stones of the Rue de l'Université which polished their silences.

They wound about alleys, wet, exchanging handkerchiefs by unsaid requests, he shifting his large umbrella this way and that to cover her little head. She knew that he and she were thinking of nothing. Everything was perfect, it was all suspense and nirvana.

Oh that they need never speak! It could only break the glass of perfection. They walked by a student's hotel, a high, crumbling, thin, backward-tending house of the time of Molière. They stopped in front of its modest light. Clasped tight, silent, they were transfixed. The door was open and seemed ready to enclose them. In some unforeseen way they came into its miniature vestibule.

The proprietor peered through an opening. Understanding, he said nothing but "Twenty-eight." It was an attic chamber on the sixth floor, under a weighty mansard, its skylight window stopped with rags. They climbed up the dark staircase, their arms tight, their lives united, light-stepping away from fears and calculation.

When they came into the dark room, Cécile dropped her handbag on the floor, flung herself about her beloved, cried, "Oh, my love," clutched his neck with her small black-gloved hands, and stood up to cover his face with kisses. Her cold wet face and streaming eyes came against his high cheeks; she held firm his quivering lips.



He soon held her in a tender vice but one from which there was no escaping. How had they come up there? What brought the chaste Cécile into that attic room? How did they sign these unseen invitations to each other? God alone knows; His silence gives us no clue.

He fell back in the rickety armchair, she curled up on his lap, and rested her ear on his strumming chest. She was soothed into sleep by the movement of his heart. As she lost understanding, he hummed softly an old lullaby of his mother adapted from *M'appari* in *Martha*. He never let go of her though he too was soon asleep. He brought his head up with a jerk when it fell back. Many times in the night he aroused himself in this way and smiled to see her curled about him like an enchanted sentimental squirrel.

The next morning they were awakened by the landlord. He told them it was ten o'clock, and, as they had no luggage, could he please have ten francs? A thousand pardons, Monsieur, Madame, but it must be done. Cécile, unembarrassed, dipped into her suède purse and paid him twenty. "We are remaining this afternoon, please to send us coffee and *brioche*s." She was pleased with her forwardness, it made her gay.

"They do not expect you back at Béziers?" said Onésime wonderingly.

"Does thy precious family expect thee back at Béziers?"

"That's different, I left mine months ago, for good."

"Not different, cherub. I've left mine too. I told Papa I would marry you and he howled at me for a pauper's wife. You will marry me, Onésime, marry me soon? As soon as the banns permit, I mean?"

"My dearest, for what else do I live?"

"Then we must go to Paris. There both of us can find work, I with friends, you in the wine halls. My money will carry us for a few weeks and after that, not a centime, for your dear Cécile is disowned. Think of the Beaux-Arts at Paris. Either Papa or Mamma must pass to the other shore before I come into money, and then I will get only the strict minimum the Code compels. But that's enough."

• Onésime saw no reason for leaving pleasant Montpellier. "Why can't we stay here, dear? I have a job."

"Do you want the swarm of Renouviers buzzing about you? Then stay. But for me, adventure in Paris, my life's dream."

The landlord could be heard puffing up the sixth stair carrying the coffee and *brioche*s. He entered without knocking. He loved to hear the squealing of girl students when they were surprised in the act of love. He could tell his lady a good tale of their embarrassments to the accompaniment of stale snuff. It was half the fun of hotelkeeping.

Cécile received him insolently, dropped a five-franc piece on the platter and motioned him out. He honoured her for her authority. His hotel was attracting a richer class.

Onésime brusquely took the lead and made up their programme. He was to return that afternoon for his belongings. Cécile was to wait for him at the station. She was to buy two Paris tickets, third-class. But, after coffee, her old refinements came back. She could not stay in that miserable room for a few hours, even, or in a sordid railway waiting-room.

"I need a bath badly," said the candidate for Bohemian life. "My bag is at the station. I shall go to the Hôtel P.L.M. where I will take a room and bath for the afternoon. You meet me there and then we'll set off for Paris on the night train. Who wants to be wearied with the sight of fields for fifteen hours? Not me." She needed her bath crystals, scented L'Heure Bleue; she required her finely bolted Fougère Royal talc. She had no idea that these comforts connoted a full purse. She never had anything else. She felt messy in any lingerie worn more than a day. Although her heart was fresh from a night of sleep, even of chaste sleep with her Onésime, her clothes were crumpled.

Her insinuations took some bloom off the wondrous night for Onésime but he loyally obeyed. When he got back to his room there was a severe note from Chardonroux ordering him to explain his absence. So he glided out by a side road, carrying his paper valise. The slave of passion regarded his benefactor merely as a nuisance. Nothing counted but Cécile. He passed the Jardin des Plantes, whistling like a thrush. He only wanted to get to his woman, so unexpectedly his own.

At the hotel the couple were incautious enough to register as *Sabatier, Onésime, et Madame, Béziers*. This was a police offence as they were not married.

By the time they got upstairs Cécile had lost the magic of the night before. Then they had been too enraptured to bring their bodies together, now they knew they were to do it. She had taken

a suite of two rooms for she wished to be private until she was presentable. During the night all bars between two souls had been let down. Now they were carefully put up again. There were more in the suite than themselves. There was a morality play with the old actors, Taste, Reserve, Habit. Onésime fretted a bit, but he was so thrilled that as he stretched on the chaise longue and awaited her toilette, he mused lazily and kept on repeating, "I am happy."

She glanced through the door, just ajar, and laughed with the rich family laugh of the Renouviers. Her cheeks dimpled, she put her deep-instepped Chinese foot neatly into the salon. "Come to your bath, you lazy, filthy boy. Mother speaking." It was not what he expected. At that age it is hard for love to wait a minute, it seems so cruel.

As he lay in the tub, Cécile came into the room, laughing at his male form. This was what she had awaited many a long day and dreamed of many an unquiet night.

She delightedly smoothed the hair on his chest, turned him about like a porpoise, ridiculously but carefully combed the tiny curled hairs on his shoulder blades. She kept pouting short but frequent kisses on his lathered ears. She tickled, bit, explored, pushed, exactly like a woodpecker in love. She was seventeen, in other words, and out to prove it.

Onésime knew that this sprite had one schoolgirl attainment. She was mad on natural history and was familiar with details of the life of bird and fish and mammal, and it had not been their breathing that attracted her light high-school titters the most.

Their loves were soon consummated in that witty manner nature reserves for her favourite toys, the animal creation. Onésime, twenty-one, tall, broad-boned, high-cheeked, rough-skinned, long-nosed, long-torsoed too, held easily Cécile of the squab form. Her chestnut hair shook. The virgin past was forgotten on the instant. A great pallor came over her face, sweat poured out of her temples, her eyes closed taut, her small arched teeth opened wide to sink into his clavicle and remained there deep like a newborn child's grip. Onésime held her to himself with the Boeotian certainty of the male.

After the dark interval after their joys, when they could at last look again upon each other, the children went back to kisses, that last night were passion's seal, to-day only a pleasant postlude.

From their window the two naked lovers embraced, looked upon

the wide marshes along the Mediterranean, six miles away. Horizon was necessary to them after such intensity. Their eyes took in the peace of the curfew scene. How little spoken, how much gained! Years of artificial quarrels taught nothing, now love and simplicity bore them many gifts.

The evening came on and they dressed. They rested together, calm, too unambitious to prepare for the train to Paris. Onésime questioned, "All this is lovely, but so expensive. I wonder if we will be as happy in a shabby room in the slums of Paris?"

The answer came in a baritone voice from outside the door. "Let me in, I tell you. I am Mademoiselle's brother. I must see her at once. It is urgent."

Cécile rose quickly. "It's that fool brother of mine, François." She went to the door and quickly opened it wide. In tumbled François who had been trying to force it. She addressed the heap on the floor.

"Who said *Madame* would not receive you? Why this fuss? Mind your manners, François, our name is involved."

François rose and told the hotel clerk to leave. Then, as in duty bound, he lifted his cane towards Onésime. Onésime rushed forward, and easily broke the cane in two, that cane so dear to François, for with it he had slugged defenceless Jews in the Paris ghetto and helpless old workmen in the Citroën factory. They got to fist fighting *à l'anglaise*. François was the more skilled, Onésime the stronger. Onésime got the excitable fellow on a chance blow. He lost wind and tasted the carpet for the second time.

Cécile was foolish enough to sprinkle his face with Eau de Cologne instead of making a run for it. "Get up, Brother," she ordered, "and talk sense or not at all." He was helped to a chair, blinked a bit, tried to glower in proper stage style but the effort was too much for him.

He protested, "Cécile, you must come back. You haven't lost all—er—self-respect? Have you—have you gone so far—no, Cécile, I cannot phrase it. You are my sister, you know."

"All right, François, prig, I will put it into words. I have given myself to Onésime. We are to be married, Papa's consent or no, certainly without yours. I owe you no explanations. But I do not fail you in courtesy."

"You have a *dot* of a million," breathed François heavily. "You have lost it. All you will get out of both estates is five millions, the

minimum. Onésime, I tell you to your face you are not worth her sacrifice of six million francs. Why are you so vain?"

Onésime was furious. "Why? Because I have loved her for ten years. Since then she has nearly teased me into the grave and still I loved her. She scorned me when I was serious. She laughed at me when I was simple and sincere. That did not discourage me, will your dull words? I am a first-class wine-grower, master and foreman. Are you as good a lawyer? Poor? Watch me, some day I may rival your father's fortune in wine. If Cécile wants me to be a painter——"

"I do," she interrupted.

"Then I hope to surprise you all in that too. I don't know how much money I am worth giving up for, that's up to Cécile."

François was still weak. Cécile was pitiless. "Leave this room, you fool. You have desecrated it. It is my bridal chamber. You have brought hate here. Get out and tell the family they either approve my love or they never see me again." She pushed the limping fellow to the door.

He made his poor assault, "There are legal obstacles to marriage at your age. We are the richest family in Béziers and *noble* . . ."

"And," Cécile corrected, "Onésime's mother is like ours, a Duhamel from the Cotentin where every British noble humbly seeks his origins——"

"Don't be clever, Cécile. I'm going to kill you, Onésime, if your spawn is in my sister and cannot be got out. Cécile is our pride. Papa spoke of marrying her to a Montcalm, perhaps a Rodez-Benavent. But not a Sabatier. Not a working-man."

His lips opened nervously and he suddenly screamed, "Damn the Republic that permits degradation. Damn it, heritage of the stupid nineteenth century." The fat boy, even at such a moment, rolled over the hackneyed lingo of the French royalists. Cécile cut him short. She pushed him on to the lift and rubbed her hands for riddance.

"Let's pack and on to Paris," she said quickly as she came back. "We shall be married I know where, in the *mairie* of the sixth *arrondissement*. I'll never forget the view. We shall look upon the Saint-Sulpice as we come out. Well, on to Paris, darling." The Renouvier laugh rang the glass chandeliers.

*Flight into the Marsh*

THE omniscient page boy of their hotel scuttled up the stairs to inform Onésime that a reception committee was gathering below. Among them was the chief of police. François had preferred two charges, one of false registration, a misdemeanour, the other of seduction of a woman under eighteen, a felony. The police chief was protesting to François that if such charges were allowed, half France would be in jail.

Tipped off by the police, the hotel manager came up. He wanted no scandal. Chambermaid, valet, manager and page were ranged against authority; three for tips, the manager by fear. The unhappy lovers were smuggled out into the delivery yard, then to the Rue d'Alger, thence into the courtyard of *L'Éclair*, eminently conformist paper owned by a very rich family into which François dreamed Cécile might be admitted on the wings of five million francs.

The chief of police and François came up the lift with official deliberation. Their birds had flown. The wild brother offered five thousand francs reward to spread a net about the city. The reward was known on the instant and the life of Montpellier stood still, while its sixty guardians of order scoured town for the wretches. The watchman at one *octroi* gate lifted his green crushed cap to the police head and François and told them that a blue-black taxi, containing a man and woman, had sped down the highroad to Palavas beach. There was no turning to the right, there was only one half-possible crossroad to the left, four miles down. That went east into the desolate marshes near Carnon. There was a chance that they might get on a road to the moat-creased town of Mauguio but the police could precede them on the route.

Police motor-cycles were manned, five thousand francs to the winner. The provincial telephones were kept buzzing. Railway gatemens, *octroi* watchers, local innkeepers were warned. The meshes were complete.

Onésime was quick to foresee the moves of the police. In the

taxi he said to the unafraid Cécile, "There's one thing they won't think of. Everyone that escapes goes by quick transportation, car, plane, train, motor-boat, or else he stands still in a haystack, loft or cellar, rarely a third choice. Why shouldn't we get on to a deserted barge meandering along the Canal du Rhône? That should take us into the swamps about Aiguesmortes. It's only thirty kilometres but the trip might take us two days. That gives us time to think."

Cécile yawned. "Why go to all that trouble? What do we care about François's charges? Except for the registration, it's his word against ours. Papa will make him drop this idiotic business. It's the selling season and he has no time for crazy sons. Onésime, let's motor back to Béziers and speak to Papa. Let your mother be present and no harm will come. Papa will let us marry, he can refuse me nothing. Oh, don't let's turn a farce into a tragedy! We love each other too much. Last night, when we walked in the rain, I knew my life had turned. Why fly? They will look all over France. We have no passports. Hide forever?"

Onésime bent over and asked the driver, "Is there any road to Béziers?"

"None, and no way to any road. You said I was to go to Palavas. That's the other way. What's up," he asked in sudden panic, "running away? God, I can't get into trouble. I've just done two years at Aniane reformatory. I'm on probation. I'll turn you in, must." He stopped the taxi and looked for a spanner. Onésime seized the situation at once, hit out at the driver, then threw the groaning fellow into the marsh by the dike road, and sped towards Palavas beach.

Onésime implored Cécile to leave him but she was persistent. They left the taxi and clambered into the uncertain marsh, sank badly, but got on to firmer footing, and muddy, dog-tired and scratched were soon at a good distance from the road, hidden in the tall grass and further defended by the glare of the setting sun which was against the searchers.

Within the hour they had gone a mile and a half and were at the rim of the lagoon at an abandoned hut, Le Mas Rouge. From there they saw the cabins of beachcomber fishermen, half-wrecks, and lazily disposed. They crept down by three poplars, the only trees in that dread expanse of marsh grass and bulrushes. The sun shone fiercely on the whitish intensely reflecting shallow waters of

the lagoon: across it, nearly a kilometre away rose the embankment of the Rhône-Sète canal. They could get there by swimming after dusk.

No one came near Le Mas Rouge. They heard the hallooing of police at the fishermen's shanties.

"Have you seen a well-dressed girl and a tall broad fellow?"

"Not a sign."

"Keep on the watch, a thousand francs for you if they're taken." The beachcombers' voices went mad in timbre. That was more than their annual cash income.

"No fear. They'll curse the day we saw them."

The couple heard the clatter of voices from apparently deserted cabins.

"Pierre, Georges, René, get out the flatbottoms. Scan the lagoon. Stay there day and night. They must try to swim across at night. There's no moon and it's clouding against stars. They know it."

From the right cabin they heard a stout fisherman shouting, "Good night, good woman. Don't be afraid. I've got a long knife. My oars are muffled. I'll get them if I have to scrape the whole lagoon. Back in the morning with a thousand francs."

So three boats came on the lagoon to trap two youths guilty of love. Three boats manned by good fellows guilty of poverty. Money held empire over that lonely marsh it had never seen, never come near.

"It's easy to get across," said Onésime lightly. "Let's strip and make rucksacks out of our clothes. The lagoon is scarcely more than a metre at the deepest point. I think it's less at this crossing. How are your shoes? Sun-dried?"

"Almost presentable," laughed Cécile. "We shall attend the prefect's dance to-night."

Onésime patted her hand. "You're a brave little thing."

At seven it was dead dark. Twenty-one hours after they had met they began to swim softly across the pitch-black lagoon. Their strokes were the most deliberate possible. They heard no noise, they made none. Muffled oars were opposed to calculated, manipulated arms.

In a few minutes, Cécile whispered, "Are you on the right way?"

Onésime answered still more softly, "If not, we'll stick on an island with the cranes. I think I'm right." He never stopped



swimming. They kept on unwearingly until they made out a rising mass. It was the hoped-for canal embankment.

They scrambled up and waited, still nude, trembling on the slope. Onésime peered over into the canal. A motor-driven canal boat was approaching with a long train of barges. It had a green light, the indication that it was headed for Tarascon. They huddled on the slope, fearful of that lone green lamp. Underneath the slope they heard what must have been muffled oars. The cranes made their night noise, stood on their sleeping legs, and so went to bed. For hours the refugees heard muffled oars. The approaching barges never came nearer. They could not clothe themselves, it would make a real disturbance. Midnight came, they shivered, and embraced firmly; their cold nude bodies slowly warmed each other. Their lips pressed light kisses but did not draw them.

The screeching of reed birds, the hallucination that dozens of boats with muffled oars were everywhere, the feeling that death's heads were at the prows of phantom flatboats, the murky inclement sky brought their spirits low. Suddenly the barge boat moved. The two creatures, now nearly dry but miserable, climbed over the canal top as the deliberate procession passed by and got on to the fifth barge, one covered with the debris of wheat. It was a large open granary but it would serve until morning.

A half-hour later they reached the watch cottage at the draw-bridge. It was the loneliest spot on that deserted coast. The watchman asked the barge conductor, "Did you see those two? Region's up in arms. Everyone's heard. Thousand francs. You know what? The exiled royal family. Come down to start an uprising at Nîmes. Ten thousand followers ready. That's what we hear."

They went by the gazetteer. All night long the motor-boat kept chugging. It was a hurry trip for it was harvest-time and empty space must be made up now or never.

Onésime, despite his fatigue, could not sleep. They couldn't risk being discovered in the open barge at five o'clock. At dawn anyone on the canal embankment would see them. They must get into a closed barge. Cécile dressed herself with surprising neatness, Onésime more carelessly. Then she slept until wakened at four. There was no kissing for their muscles were canals of pain. They crept from one boat to another as the first break in the night was suggested. So they got into a barge used for storing vinegar

barrels. The odour was frightful but the barge was placarded: NO INSPECTION UNTIL DESTINATION MARSEILLE. Their only remaining problem was how to emerge safely near some town, and in this they had brisk confidence on account of their previous good luck. The dawn found them all smiles. By six, Onésime dared to look out and saw before him the strangest sight on earth, so it seemed.

The canal was lost in an endless swamp. Far off, as in the dream of some bard, there rose out of the void a city within high walls, perfect walls, a grandiose parallelogram. The parapets were high, well above the level of the eye. The watchtowers, intact, peopled the walls; a great round tower, beautiful in form, commanded this brood of watchtowers. It was the capital of the lost worlds, chief city of Nothing, walled citadel of the mind's eye.

Cécile and Onésime stared before the insubstantial but immense fabric. Slowly memory stole away their first imaginings and they knew it for Aiguesmortes, the dead city of St. Louis. It was his high fortress erected against the infidel, his city of departure for the faith-consumed Crusaders.

"Let us go there," Cécile suggested gaily. "I will get myself a peaked long paper hat and become a fitting inhabitant. Does the barge actually reach that city? Or must we get out and cross the marsh, enter the gates, and then pull at the pillows and wake up?"

The fresh hot morning swamp smell woke up reflection.

"It's perfect," Onésime cheered himself. "Aiguesmortes, city of the dead waters, leading nowhere, connected with no other place except by that thin causeway of ten miles and connected with the twentieth century by a causeway of seven hundred years! Who would trouble us there? The police look for men only among the living. Cemeteries are safe from their explorations. Besides which, they have to look for real people in a real world, they cannot find us in this ordered dream."

Within two hours the barge came under the stupendous walls, meandered about the southern gates, made its slow way around another hairpin bend, at which the lovers scrambled out to be greeted by a bevy of she-goats, contented chewers of the mean and dirty grass that haunts the crumbling bases of fortifications. The conductor of the barge, pipe in his mouth, unaffected by the oftseen mystic vision, was reading an article in the *Dépêche de Toulouse* on the importance of exact observation, by the psychologist Piéron.

It was an unrivalled opportunity. The happy couple, swinging

arms, entered the compact antique city, chunky with stinks. There were the droppings of all domestic beasts and man, the urine of domestic beasts and cheap-wine-drinking man, neglected rubbish, age-old smell of damp stone, deserted buildings, muddy sod, cracking cobbles and rickety doors, with the stench of old tar. Here St. Louis could have affronted the Saracen, for the Moslem would have reeled back.

They wandered through the pestilential town, every inhabitant of which seemed over eighty, everyone limping, all rheumatic. It was a city of crones, of ancient wizards and it had more crutches than Lourdes. The hobbling citizenry flaunted their creaking joints across dead lanes. At the end of every street, the city walls rose above all roof tops, even above church steeples.

Enclosed in this absolute box, a toy pattern moulded the fancies of the lovers. They soon turned corners carefully like cardboard dolls. Some children actually existed. They wore dirty, torn, grey, patched petticoats; the boys looked like oafs, their heads screwed whichways over their scholastic tabards. Was anyone normal in that city? They recalled then that they were back in the Middle Ages, they were dead, and these were corpses signalling the infirmities of which they had died.

When these reflections were well established, they entered the main square of the city. There was an academic statue of St. Louis. He was paleness itself, the chalk colour of a child bled on a sacrificial altar, with a Gothic formality in his stare. The square was surrounded by plenty of bars, full (to their startled eyes only, really sparsely peopled) of healthy young men. Around the bars bicycles were stacked, the principal means of crossing the causeway to the outer world. The bars boasted signs of sporting clubs. Before them the lazy clients played at bowls between drinks.

Then their glance fell on the Rue Carl-Marx and the Rue Frédéric-Engels. It was revealed that amidst the floating towers of the Middle Ages thought had penetrated and given a shape to dissatisfaction.

"Well," Onésime observed indifferently, "I was mistaken. This city seems to be of the dead but there is a police force here. Wherever there are socialists there are sure to be gendarmes."

"No fear of the police," Cécile chirped, "this is a tourist centre; let us speak with an English accent and we shan't be bothered." They carefully rehearsed the silly performance, interspersing their

parodies with laughs. Adroit imitations of the Yankee accent had been taught the French by an inimitable comic, Koval. They roared as they nasalized. The twang fascinated them, their laughs grew louder. They had forgotten the police in their happiness. By the time they entered the open space underneath the massive main gateway, with the immense guard chambers of the seneschal above, they were hungry and careless.

The morning hours passed as in the golden age. Inexpressibly weary at the dawn, by ten o'clock, after a mere coffee and *croissant*, Onésime gassed abundantly of his art ambitions. He bought a sketch book and drew pencil impressions. The Tower of Constance was copied with precision, for that was the atrocious jail of the Huguenots. Few *donjons* have witnessed deeper misery. Its legends were the stand-by of every Protestant home in the region; its every stone cursed in passionate sermons.

Cécile mounted the parapets and came into the Tower. The two were followed carefully by a wide-eyed girl of seventeen who viewed Cécile with instant animal hatred. She spoke gruffly to her, then gave fond looks towards Onésime and stared long at him with no regard for Cécile's feelings. She was the daughter of the constable of the Tower and bitter at having to repeat the same rigmarole year in and out to knots of tourists.

Cécile asked, "Can we go about the parapets? Are they open anywhere or are they perfectly intact?"

"Is Mademoiselle," she inquired carefully, looking at Cécile's ring finger, "afraid of a sheer drop?"

"I don't feel comfortable at it."

"I assure Mademoiselle that the parapet is fairly preserved. You can make the rounds in about forty-five minutes returning to point of origin, this Tower of Constance. Two francs each, please."

The couple began their tour of the walls. They glanced through the hundreds of slits, squinted downwards, imagined the pouring of boiling oil and pitch and Greek fire, visioned rams and catapults, looked far beyond to the placid green sea, tried to see the Arab enemy on the African shore waiting under the crescented green flag of Islam for the Frankish warriors, looked for the choirs of the monks of Psalmodi whose town this once was, stopped in every tower to kiss, so that the forty-five minute circuit consumed two hours. Cécile spoke water-colour observations of the soaked marsh

stretches, and wondered at the strangely curved horizon which was due to the flat surfaces of different colours. With every water-colour observation she embraced her fiancé with the lavishness of an oil painting.

At points the parapets were low and, strangely enough, it was Onésime that quaked. When they came to an open space, Cécile had to take the open side of the yard-wide walk, direct his glance away from the terrible drop, keep him from seeing the roofs of houses beneath them, and so ignore the plateau of red mansards that would terrorize him. His vertigo fears gained steadily; at two thirds of the way across he stopped with terror. His muscles wavered, he could go no farther on that dreaded thin walk, and he fainted at the watchtower.

Cécile revived him and suggested they go back but he could not stir. He dared not move and would have been relieved if death had struck him, for it would save him from making a step forwards or backwards. Cécile, herself, was miserable on this open wall and yet there was no way out. They were in the most remote, silent part of town. She called and called again, but no one heard. She felt that they were as corpses exposed on the Towers of Silence at Bombay, waiting for the vultures to pick their wasted bodies. For an hour Onésime, strong and brave, lay there a victim of that want of balance that disables giants. Cécile cried madly and at last the constable's daughter was seen approaching from the Tower of Constance, by the last third of the circuit, the best protected section of the walk. She came up.

That girl of average weight for her age, took up Onésime in her arms and carried him into her father's lodge in the Tower, where the post cards were sold to visitors. She applied smelling salts and cologne to his nose and temple, and poured sharp brandy through his trembling opened lips. Vertigo fainting was not rare on the high walls of Aiguesmortes. Her strength seemed supernatural. She held up her hand to her eyes and solemnly studied her garnet ring. It was the colour of fat blood pressed out of a thumb's end. The mystic city and the girl completed the terror of Cécile. Rather brave the police in the twentieth century than live in the thirteenth and despair of one's mind.

"Is there any charge, Mademoiselle?" Cécile asked.

"We stock fine Spanish combs, and we expect clients whom we have assisted to buy them." Two standard high Spanish combs were

sold for the good price of a hundred francs, and the bases of sanity re-established.

Cécile asked Onésime if he were all right, took up his hat and sketch book, and, police danger or no, rushed for the last bus headed for the cities of reason where men were foolish enough to worry over the present. The bus conductor asked, "Where to?"

"Nîmes," Onésime guessed. Good luck, it was the right terminus.

Cécile held him close. "I have lived more in two days than in seventeen years." Relieved, she amused herself with dressing her hair and arranging the Spanish combs.

## *A Roman City Presents Two Circuses*

THE bus zigzagged over causeway, desert, parched plain and stumptreed lands in the course of a short run. All these were reduced to one in the common pulp of night. The passengers were nearly asleep, drugged by bad air, fatigue, hunger. Two soldiers took out their six-inch army penknives and cut breads and redolent Arles sausages to the envy of the car-sick crew. The bus heaved into the Avenue of the Bull, went by the splendid statue of a fighting toro, and whizzed by large mansions into a maze of tortuous mean streets. It emerged opposite the Roman arena, one of the show places of that fancy monument-peopled town.

Onésime and Cécile were now so dazed by their compressed adventures that they had forgotten what was at the bottom of all this and why they were doing it at all. They collapsed into the first restaurant they saw. It was a miserable eating house where immense bowls were handed around the tables. They contained stewed tripe in suspicious thick brown gravy. It was the messy *gras double*, staple of the poor. While they were gulping this hideous stuff, their eyes chanced on headlines in a neighbour's newspaper.

### SWAMP HUNT PROVES VAIN

Was Cécile Renouvier murdered?

A family mourns

OUR INTERVIEWER'S EXCLUSIVE STORY OF MME SABATIER

Nîmes Police arrest two couples, both released.

"We are vigilant," says Des Brosses, Prosecutor of the Gard.

• Cécile pressed Onésime's trembling hand. She whispered, "Keep on eating. We might have seen this item an hour later and so enjoyed even this supper, such as it is." But he shifted uneasily, nervously asked for the reckoning, and steered into a dark narrow

lane off the *Maison Carrée*. He was harassed by the miseries he was imposing on a girl he had so long adored.

"Cécile, I am going to the police. They are bound to take us. Our happy love has been scarred by François. Come, every young man and woman found together will be questioned by the cycle police, or at any hotel. Our identity cards are a give-away. You go home and after a flurry of scolding and a cross-eyed wink or two from the city gossips, you will soon be all right. What can happen to me? They must find me guilty for I am poor and François influential. But it is a first offence, you freely consented, you are within several days of being eighteen, and my family's reputation is excellent. They will suspend sentence, or, at worst, give me a month or two at Aniane."

Cécile put her hand on his chin and turned his face to her. "So this is what I have lavished my love on? Let me look at you. What have I done with years of safety? Nothing! Two days of danger? Love, life, yes, fun. And this you want to spare me! Sentimental donkey! Die in war so that we can stay at home, surrender to the police so that your bric-à-brac doll is not chipped. I really love you; your danger is the breath of my life. Idiot!" Onésime tried to kiss her to stifle the accusation. She pushed him aside. "That's why women in the colonies come to the little headstones of their miserably poor husbands for years after. They made them fight alongside them. No, Onésime, I won't give you the privilege of letting you suffer for me. I have about three thousand francs. Out of that buy me a ticket for Béziers and take the rest. No one has your picture. Go, find work in some distant place. Lyon, say, they won't notice your Southern accent there. Let me face my family alone, I'll make them drink my spit and swear it is champagne."

They came up against the post-card perfection of the *Maison Carrée* and were soon back on the boulevard. The gay crowd, mostly of women in their bizarre loud-coloured dresses, passed in full noisy swirl. There was not a single mode of Paris on that avenue, for that provincial capital swabbed a wide deck with its home-made broom. The spectrum was their guide to fashion, derision was their polestar. The mocking sons and daughters of Nîmes looked at no one but to sneer. Only the numerous Protestants kept up the rear guard of convention; wore the cloaks of decorum.

Cécile's chestnut hair, streaked with titian, was set with her large



Spanish combs. The couple were followed by slick vicious laughs before Onésime could answer Cécile. He turned and was soon involved in his third fist fight in two days. As, in French law, who-soever is involved in a fight, however just or defensive, is automatically guilty, few indeed try it, and those who do, nearly always win.

He thrashed the amazed insulting young coxcomb, slapped his face mercilessly, and then, grasping him by his thin tail, pitched him into a crowd of foppish cronies on the terrace of a floral café.

"Another insult and this whole damned crowd goes." He supplemented,

"Now, you damn snobs, just say another word about my fiancée's Spanish combs." He loomed large, and a wide circle cleared about his apparently growing knuckles. Cécile was delighted. Her lover had a dull understanding and he was full of formless sentiment. But his sense of direct justice swept away the cobwebs of boyhood Christian training.

"Onésime," she held on to his biceps, "you're like Marcel Thil."

In the crowd that witnessed the fist fight were two detectives, Landieux of Montpellier and Gros of Béziers. "That looks like the Renouvier girl," Gros insisted. "I've seen her with her family. Let's question her."

"Nonsense," swept aside the other detective relying on reason, "the most hunted couple in the region don't get into street brawls. My colleague, we are not seeking an apache. Your scent is so keen that you have lost all other senses including that of proportion." Gros appeared to be convinced, but a moment later, excusing himself, left his associate and trailed the two.

Cécile forgot her sermon to Onésime. She was in the gayest temper. They threaded through the thick crowds which they found were due to the *corrida*, the last of the year. It was to be staged to-morrow in the Roman arena. There eight superb bulls, from the *ganadería* of some duke or other near Salamanca, were to be sacrificed to four of Spain's most celebrated matadors with their full *cuadrillas* in glory. That was why money, life and clatter had burst open the few gay highways of Nîmes.

It made Cécile happy. She was a mad *aficionada* of the bull ring at Béziers. She fluttered like a blood-tasting trout. "Onésime, let's go. We are safer in a crowd of ten thousand than anywhere." Then, as she confessed, the mere mention of bulls and matadors inflamed her. The bull was the symbol of the male, gory, belligerent,

stupid, pawing wildly at nothing, wasting his superb rolling eyes on the rear of a peaceful, permanently chewing cow. The matador, his tight silk trousers showing in salmon hues his exquisitely divided buttocks, the feeling of length given by his pink form-fitting stockings to his nether parts, his poised motion that spoke of muscular spring, all these plus his *éclat* gave him, for her, the supremacy of peacock over peahen. Her powerful wine-gathering Don José seemed bearded and slow compared to matadors. But for that night he was their peer.

They went boldly into a leading hotel, the Cheval Blanc, opposite the arena. They registered shamelessly as M. Lebrun and *Mlle Duval*. There was something in the cash-built frown of Cécile that kept the stodgy reception clerk neutral. He ushered them to their room with obsequious suppressed disrespect.

Their chamber had no charm to compare with yesterday's. It was stuffy, outmoded in furnishings, the *cabinet de toilette* partitioned off inelegantly. But for two people who had slept in a barge boat after a police-induced swim, it was good. Across the way, in the light moon rays, the ghostly perfection of the arena was a soothing vision. The finest preserved Roman arena extant, it made their journey and difficulties a set of pin points on a static chart of time. They became more serene, but really they were on the point of collapse. They fell into instant deep sleep. Their enjoyments were deferred to the morning, when refreshed, they pursued them with matinal vigours down to the plump satisfactions of the noon hour. Life was worth living, even in a room with red-figured wallpaper.

They emerged from their shell about two o'clock. They took the inexpensive sunny side in the arena. Detective Gros was mounting tier after tier seeking the wealthy Cécile on the shady side.

The band began, in the French wont, with a mispitched version of the *March of the Toreador* in *Carmen*, the *España* of Chabrier, the *Symphonie Espagnole* of Lalo, the *Capriccio Espagnol* of Rimsky-Korsakov. Apparently it was a strict rule at Nîmes that Spaniards do not compose Spanish atmosphere.

After the introductory trumpets, the Spanish ritual began. The bulls were excellent, large and appropriately scoundrelly. The management bowed as they were cheered for the spectacle. The matadors were in full form, svelte, certain, grandly and finely murderous; the fanatics, for once, criticized little and applauded maniacally.

In this ocean there was a ripple of hand clapping from Cécile. The galleries were filled with women in amber, emerald, turquoise, sienna, ruby skirts and blouses, escorted by monocled mugs, and all waved handkerchiefs both white and coloured. Cheap caps were thrown into the arena and so all the inflexible forms of enthusiasm were carefully followed.

Despite this bull killing, one unslain bull roamed the galleries. This time he had a *belinogramme* of Cécile, wired from Béziers. He had another, less definite, of Onésime. At the killing of the eighth bull he located his two objectives in ten-franc seats. He motioned to half a dozen men posted in the arena. All were anxious to share in François's five-thousand-franc award. There was now added a like amount offered by Denys Renouvier simply for his daughter's return.

The crowd came out, lavish in comments on the styles of the toreadors. At the entrance sombre men and women were distributing leaflets, one of which was thrust into Onésime's hands.

### GOD DISAPPROVES OF CRUELTY

Among thousands that mock His words, we bear witness to God's mercy. You have enjoyed the torture and death of beasts that offended no one, that were goaded to fight. Is it your foretaste of the torments of the Inferno? Will God forgive those that exult in the sufferings of His creatures? The French law absolutely prohibits the *mise à mort*, the deadly Spanish bullfights. Where are the magistrates? They are present violating the Code! Why do they not favour our beautiful *cocarde* Languedoc bullfights in which no harm is done and in which the ornaments of skill and courage are greater than in the vaunted Inquisition-born Spanish bullfights? Because Satan has informed their hearts!

We protest as Christians and Frenchmen.

### THE EVANGELICAL SYNOD OF NÎMES

Onésime winced. Unconsciously he put his hand on his heart. His boyhood Protestant training made him ashamed and fearful. He felt as though his God would punish him on the instant. But Cécile enjoyed the fights, even if he did not, and she, he knew, was wrong in nothing. Both walked gaily, swinging their arms together.

Inspector Gros came up and said softly, "Sabatier, Renouvier, I hold you for questioning."

Onésime looked at him blankly, without surprise. It was Jehovah's move. Cécile looked thwarted, hurt in her pride. They were soon on the train, separated, each with two escorts, and ready at nine in the morning to face the informal private hearing (instead of public trial) arranged at Béziers by the wealth and influence of Denys Renouvier.

## *A Saucy Endogamist*

THE magistrate's private chambers looked like an undertaker's weeping parlour. There was present red-eyed, embarrassed Denys Renouvier, richest man in the city, humiliated, quaking with fear that the radical press would get wind of the business. By his side, his wife, wealthiest hereditary dame in Béziers, sat contrite, nervous, weeping. Gisèle hid her face behind her mother. She had never imagined any difficulties of any kind in this soft life. Secretly an admirer of Cécile, between sobs she wondered what appearance her wayward sister would make in court. The two nonthinking brothers wished death on their busybody brother whose haste had brought on all these troubles.

François, pleased as Punch at the marvellous mess he had conjured out of nothing, sat in the conspicuous seat of the legal complainant. He already acted as though he had inherited the presidency of the *conseil de famille*. Poor Mme Sabatier, in deep black, sat on the other side of Denys Renouvier, who held her hand and consoled her that "this nonsense" would soon be over.

"They will be married," Denys muttered indifferently. "My time is too valuable to be wasted to-day. Every big buyer from England and Holland is here for the auctions. Rubbish." Stéphane was missing. His employer would not have yielded him half an hour in which to bury his mother.

There was silence as the accused were led into court. They were placed in the witness box, flanked by those immense gendarmes whose moustaches and get-up indicate that they have been trained as mannequins for a rehearsal of *Madame X* in Hollywood.

Cécile waved at everybody, her face a bath of large smiles. "Hello, Papa; my respects, Mother. François, no, you here? Imagine. Still angry? Learn to box better, Brother dear. Mother Sabatier," she called loudly, "welcome your daughter to your bosom."

Onésime bowed to the Renouviers who acknowledged him a bit

stiffly. They would have liked to be cordial but feared François. Onésime beckoned to his bowed mother.

The magistrate, Monsieur Théophile Bompard, was an intimate friend of Denys Renouvier, one of the few men who beat him at *belotte*, bezique, dominoes, whist, both Scotch and duplicate, and bowls.

The lawyers were, first, the procurator of the Republic, the fattest man on earth, it seemed, M. Lespinasse. Once seated he could never rise to object. His white tie was hidden by four perfect chins, absolutely symmetrical and all waving together as he flayed the criminal element; the defending barrister selected out of her Church by Mme Sabatier was the wizened mummy bag, the eighty-four-year-old Evangelical advocate, M. Pressard-Monod. He had a large rasping voice for an octogenarian and was dreaded at the bar. His nose ran forever with wet, green-streaked mucus, but his mind ran with arguments more subtle than the serpent. An informal preliminary, strictly private hearing was his specialty.

"Let the complainant stand up," the judge commanded. François rose, arranged his barrister's robe (worn for the first time), pulled at the pleated shoulder with his white hand and delivered himself of a carefully rehearsed speech.

"*M. le Président*, I come forward not as a brother to defend his sister's honour. I come as a Frenchman against a criminal under the Code. Had my sister attained the age of eighteen, and he were within his legal right in deflowering her, I would vindicate our family name with the sword or the pistol *and not by duel*. I have invoked the law as a good citizen for, where it applies, private justice is debarred. I accuse this vermin of defiling a woman under age and of forging his civil status on a hotel register."

M. Pressard-Monod shot copious snot into his old red handkerchief (a danger signal), and arose to defend love. He creaked with eunuch emotion.

"I formally deny the appalling charge that any sexual congress has occurred between my client and this excellent young lady whom I ask respectfully to accept the homage of an old man."

Cécile bowed, "I am flattered, *M. le Bâtonnier*."

"In the next place, the French code differentiates subtly between qualities of consent at sixteen and eighteen. Of these sections the ~~amateur~~ lawyer who stands as accuser did not wholly plumb the meaning in his skimmed studies at the *École de Droit*. I know he got sixty-one per cent, just enough to receive his degree. He was

too busy assailing helpless Jews and workers, this fine accuser, to master his lawbooks. So he hired a Monsieur Cohen, a professional coach, and this sapient Israelite awarded him a circumcised reading of the law of seduction (*technical laughter*). I pass by the entire question though, of consent at sixteen or eighteen. . . .”

M. Lespinasse: “Why then did you raise it?”

M. Pressard-Monod: “The better to illustrate the completeness of my real defence. We could afford to be generous on all other points. To resume, we deny in fact the seduction. We plead guilty to the venial offence of registration at the hotel as married. It was a device to shield Mademoiselle, a gentleman’s indiscretion.”

The magistrate motioned to the procurator. But the old lawyer interjected. “I stand ready to pay the fine of five hundred francs required by statute and humbly to accept a suspended sentence for the court day. That is all, *M. le Président*. My homage, Renouvier and Sabatier families, so long cherished by the community and my humble self. May your lives flow in concord hereafter.”

François broke out before the Republic could present its case. “I demand a medical examination of my sister to refute this liar in his dotage. That will prove my case to the hilt.”

“The hilt,” joked the presiding magistrate.

There was a murmur of disgust from everyone but the accuser and the jokester. The Evangelical lawyer arose, officially boiling. “I resent the pleasantries of the presiding judge and note my exceptions for the court of appeal. This is a scandalous hearing. My regard for the feelings of a fine young lady are deep. Her brother is a cad. A brother, imagine. I am dumbfounded. In the name of French womanhood, I offer my protest.”

The procurator laughed. He was hoisted by his aides and the three hundred and eighty pounds hissed in the silkiest manner. “Or, stripped of rhetoric, he dreads an examination. If an outraged brother is compelled to seek medical evidence because of the lies of the accused, the fault, forsooth, lies in his passion for justice and not in the monster who has covered our most prominent family with shame! We insist on a medical examination by a *doctoresse*. That couple did not go to hotels in Montpellier and Nîmes to say their paternosters.” This lawyer’s joke was a chestnut in Nineveh; no one smiled.

Cécile arose. She looked quietly at the little audience, determined to create a *coup de théâtre* that would humiliate her cowardly family, fill the socialist newspapers if they could find it out, smash

François, create a basis for a libel suit against him, and so provide ready cash for Onésime and herself, all in one. She asked demurely, "May I say a few words, *M. le Président*?"

M. Bompard, who had played rocking horse with her on his knees for years and carried her horsyback until she was ten, smiled and said, "Willingly, *Mlle Cécile*, please do speak."

"François demands an examination. A manœuvre that would be comic were it not gruesome. He tries to kill two birds with one stone, one a crime, second to fasten the same crime on another. I am not *virgo intacta*, you need no doctor to prove that."

The family stood up in horror. "Yes," she continued coldly, "I was despoiled of my innocence at fourteen. The criminal? I tremble to speak. None other than my unnatural lascivious brother François!"

Everyone was struck by a moral bullet; even Onésime suddenly wavered. He felt it was bluff, a trick, but . . . ? He braced himself. Recent experience proved it was a lie. He was as uncomfortable as a little boy removed from a fine parlour with saturated trousers by a caterwauling mother.

François, completely shattered by this astounding falsehood, his flabby bulk too much for him, lay back choking, trying somehow to speak of his innocence, to express his horror at Cécile.

"My brother chokes with the guilt of incest. I was forced to break silence for he has passed from degrading me to shaming me in public. That is because, like Count Cenci, though a young man he has the senile jealousy of the defiler of Beatrice. I admit I was about to consummate my love with Onésime, my first honest amour. My jealous brother broke it up. At Nîmes we were so exhausted by our marsh flight that we slept profoundly. This terrible confession has me overwrought. Forgive me," and she passed into a perfectly thought-out automatic swoon.

Her family rushed to aid her, despite the wax-faced gendarmes. François recovered. He yelled, "Hold that lying bitch. She's malingering." Everyone avoided him, then manifested disgust. He lay back sick and horrified, then blurted, "All right, I withdraw my charges. I made them to vindicate our family. Her infamous character needs no defender."

At these words Cécile somehow recovered and soon stormed. "You cad. No one can prove anything against you by a physical examination! Has the accusation been withdrawn, *M. le Président*?"



M. Bompard was cold. "It is so inscribed." He failed to add, "Mademoiselle Cécile." "Let us clear this court," he shouted. "This business is really odious."

M. Pressard-Monod, uninstructed and quick to profit by the occasion, arose. "On behalf of the Sabatier family, touched in their sentiments and on the basis of the judgment, I give notice of a suit for false arrest against M. François Renouvier in the sum of half a million francs. Do you consent, M. Onésime?"

Onésime was about to utter some platitudes about forgiveness when Cécile kicked his ankles. Their feet were concealed from view in the witness box. "I consent," he whispered.

"It's a present," she whispered. "To-morrow's my birthday."

In the lobby everyone avoided Cécile and François, as lepers. She strung a chain of giggles.

"Does anyone think there was a word of truth in what I said? But it stopped François like a cartridge."

François rushed to M. Lespinasse. "Did you hear that? Renew the accusation."

The procurator of the Republic was gruff. "You put me to infinite trouble, Monsieur, and at the first trick of the accused, you abandon a formal complaint. Don't waste my time any more. How did you ever pass your law exams? Outwitted by a baby, a child minx! You cannot renew a withdrawn complaint and so play hide and seek with guilt or innocence. By withdrawing, you made it easy to sue you for libel. A case that is adjudged cannot be discussed in France. You know that."

"I, too, will sue for libel for my sister's infamous lies."

"No, you can't," M. Pressard-Monod cackled. "She spoke in open court; you had your chance to reply and refute. You allowed this charge to be made without an answer under oath. You're cooked, my prig."

"But her charges were lies, in contempt of the honourable court."

"She was not under oath," gloated the mummy lawyer. "She was merely delivering a, shall we say, an impressionist poem."

Cécile was a battery of fun. "Poor François, beaten on every count: I take over half a million francs *tout de suite*, I have my Onésime to husband, the family takes its viper into its bosom, and the mud of my incest charges will stick somehow."

Onésime interrupted, "Stop, Cécile, the humiliation, think of it."

Cécile was merry. "It worked, didn't it? I wash out the suit, get money, and teach my family to be united hereafter. It worked." She chuckled.

François, crumbling, came out to face police and detectives. Papa Renouvier had just divided his five thousand for finding Cécile. Where was his? He brushed them aside. "No conviction, no reward."

Detective Gros spoke circumspectly. "Remember this, Renouvier, the police of Hérault do not like you from now on. You understand?" Nervously François fished out five notes and cursed.

His world was crashing about him. He fingered his revolver. His sister or Onésime? He kept on reaching for that gun, four years in his pocket and never used. Cécile was silly enough to give him a sly mocking nod; he whipped out the revolver and aimed. Onésime who had approached him to smooth matters was beside him and easily wrenched the gun from his flabby grasp. The shot went to the ceiling.

At the noise, Detective Gros rushed in. "I heard a shot. That's M. François. Come, come, no excuses." That rich family seemed a permanent Christmas tree for a covetous cop.

"Not at all, Monsieur," Onésime bowed, and with charming gestures manipulated the gun. "I showed M. François that making accusations might expose him to a bullet were it done outside the family. It is the only imagery he understands. I hope you forgive my dramatic style; it is crude but instructive."

The inspector warned everybody but left pleased with the ten thousand francs cash and knowing the Renouviers were now his prey.

Mme Sabatier would not speak to a son that sent her three post cards in three months. Denys put Onésime's hand in Cécile's and asked Mme Sabatier to kiss her new daughter. The simple mother was afraid of the overbright girl and spoke plainly.

"I shall not kiss you, Cécile, unless you tell François the story was a slander. You should be ashamed of your lying, your hideous imagination, the degradation inflicted on two families."

Cécile obeyed and everyone kissed everyone. François sulked but Father ordered: "You must live with the family all your life. You brought about this marriage. We must protect your name: Cécile's, the family. Be sensible. Onésime, at least, is of us. One sister, Gisèle, say, a countess, and you, perhaps," he knew his man, "married to, at the least, a baroness. Or," he winked, "a fortune."

François pretended to be haughty and indifferent to these vulgar attractions. He was smartly rounded up by his athletic brothers and at last asked consent of his father to sit in the family councils. So things were regulated in that land where family counts for more than anything but China. A betrothal reception was arranged at the Renouvier home in which the happiness of the new couple was toasted with long insincerities.



BOOK TWO

BIRTH OF THE ARTIST



*Stéphane Seeks the Spotlight*

THE betrothal party was over. Onésime snored like a drover. Stéphane sat up, meditative. He fingered his portfolio of sketches whether in chalks, pencil or washes. He looked inflexibly at his sleeping brother. Onésime did not have a tithe of his own abilities. His artistic ambitions were poorly founded. Yet he mouthed ambitions and the world was beginning to take him at his own valuation.

Stéphane knew his brother was easily beaten by difficulties. He studied that face so like his own. Yet a multitude of infinitesimal differences made a wholly distinct cast. He reflected, it was like a girl he knew. She had some hairs on her chin removed by electrolysis. The fabric of her skin had been altered here and there by the fraction of a millimetre. Yet the composite effect modified her expression from charm to a dull broad aspect. It was impossible for the most practised eye to catch the subtle differences that had cumulatively produced a different face. That applied to brothers. Cast out of the same mould, something too subtle for calipers must explain their differences. Perhaps their psychic motors.

The candle flickered long thin shadows over Onésime's face, taking its strength away. In the next room mother was heavily sleeping. She had drunk champagne abundantly for the first time and the unpractised virtuous lady was glad to sleep. A noisy dormitory, redolent of stale grocery odours, proved better than Diogenes's cask. It stimulated imagination.

Stéphane looked at the shaving mirror. He too was broad-boned, long-nosed, high-cheeked, Gascon. His eyes were grey with an ominous touch of green. Yet his brother looked rather elegant and he lumbering. It was all his carriage, he consoled himself. It was time for the older brother to take leadership. He had wished for Gisèle. But he made no parade of it and no one thought about it. His brother was a weak publicity type, that was all. If he wanted to paint or love, he screamed from attic windows. If Stéphane

painted he studied his defects, if he loved he was deep and modest. That was no way to get on. Gisèle the elder sister, too. Tortoise misfits, both he and she.

He had bitterly quarrelled that day with his miserly employer, M. Ardennais, a rival and near enemy of Renouvier. He knew himself to be indispensable to Ardennais as foreman and salesman, yet he took bad pay and sharp words. He intoned, "I am a dupe. Superior in ability, I accomplish nothing. The devil take it, why can't I beat the lot?" He was furious and was ready to kick his snoring brother as he had kicked him when they were kids. He decided at last to be practical and think up some business that must attract Denys Renouvier. "And not by the bedroom route, either," he sneered.

For days the producing foreman worked out schemes that were naturally related to the cheaper production of wine. Every night as he came to the mean cubbyhole behind the grocer's shop, he tossed with ambition on the poor metal springs and thin pallet. "Selling, not producing, that's what grips a business man," he uttered boyish apothegms; he got to the centre of the commercial game. One night a bedspring worked loose and stabbed him in the back. He woke up smart; the shock gave him an idea.

The next evening he invited himself to Denys Renouvier's table at the Café de la Comédie. "M. Renouvier, can I speak to you alone?" Old Denys laughed. The old preliminary to a touch. "A hundred francs, I suppose? You young fellows are all in love with the peasant girl engraved on the hundred-franc note. Now I don't think she's more than a tenth as nice as Pasteur on the thousand-franc note." He laughed at his own joke. The process took two minutes for its invariable twenty-four reverberations. Then he opened his pocketbook.

"I am thinking of a million francs, not a hundred," Stéphane said pompously. It became his grave face.

"What a sententious young man," Renouvier enjoyed himself. "You must have some earth-shaking message to deliver. Fire away, boy, I can scarcely wait."

Every rich man in France hears propositions in cafés from opinionated young men. Well, that was the penalty for being Bézier's most celebrated mandarin.

"This," Stéphane resumed slowly, "the Algerian wine business. You and all the other wine magnates here lament the cheap African



competition. Tears are for poets. Hedge your position by buying into that field. Don't let another product get you down, take it up. Don't fight a tendency. What are you battling for, a moral cause? It is a question of francs and centimes. You are afraid they will say you have double-crossed your associates in the chamber of commerce of Languedoc wines? Well, you needn't appear in all this. We pick one of those high-sounding names that you think you've heard all your life. Universal? General? that's it, *Société générale des vins de l'Algérie et du Midi*. We establish ourselves at Marseille, logically. If it proves a go, we change the name to . . ." he hesitated at his forwardness, "Renouvier, Sabatier, et Cie. If it is a mistake, who is the wiser? You never appear. As for capital, say, a million francs nominal, half a million paid up. If we were in England we would think that a fleabite. Four thousand pounds. Nothing. I know wine values and quality. Better than anyone here. That's not self-praise, that's fact. Now, Mr. Renouvier another reason." He no longer knew hesitation. "I haven't the nerve to ask for Gisèle. I want to marry her with my own money, not on your charity. You understand?"

Denys Renouvier had been busy drumming on the table, then drawing figures and casks on a table napkin. He looked up warmly at Stéphane. He had always liked him, as much as anyone can a poor relation that may some day be on your hands. "Your idea comes as a shock. Not the idea, that's commonplace. But that you have the spunk to ask for a million or half a million, you that haven't handled big accounts. I admire you. You're the first boy in Béziers that hasn't tried to sell me a piddling agency or some other genteel subterfuge. You like to work. I had been thinking of making an Algerian tour and perhaps buying into the boom vineyards on the Kabyle slopes." He did not mention that by using Arab and Berber labour at one hundred and fifty francs a month, at the outside, he could achieve his darling object of crushing the unions at home.

He sipped his liqueur thoughtfully. "Right, Stéphane. My vineyards here are my legitimate family, Algeria my back-street woman. I'll think it over. I wonder how good you are on the selling end, in a big way. That's the rub. The business is good. You know and have sold the product. You can be trusted, my own flesh and blood, a worker and honest. You'll have my answer in a day or two," he patted Stéphane's arm. "No that's not the usual song. I mean it. I want to say yes and I think I will."

Stéphane hinted to Onésime that night that the complacent workman and unobtrusive brother might spring a surprise. But he was discreet.

A few days later Renouvier called him to the study of Pressard-Monod. There, surrounded by green paper files, the parchment-skinned antique wrote an agreement on sheepskin. He insisted on it. Pulp paper to him spelled engagements easily torn up. He warned Stéphane when the ceremony was over. "Beware the two kings of Algerian wines. Pressensé is as tortuous as a scholastic distinction and as subtle as an angel's essences. Lévy-Ruhlmann is as resourceful as a cornered fox whose forebears have beaten generations of hunters. Watch!"

"I am not risking so much that he requires homilies," Denys Renouvier commented. "It's good money, but I'm a practical merchant. Stéphane surprised me by his energy, he may them by his cleverness."

It took a few weeks for the business to be set up. Stéphane at first went at it slowly. He explored Marseille for a good suite of offices, squabbled about lease terms, gradually picked up the furnishings. He used spare time to master the wine-importing business. The office was decorated with taste and originality. American walnut furniture gave it an exotic appearance. M. Renouvier came down to inspect and mocked his associate, "If you are as good at selling as at interior decoration, my boy, I may—I said, may—yet hope to recover some part of my investment." He was old enough to know which spur would goad a colt.

The offices were arranged in three rooms. On the outside Stéphane planted a Peruvian shrunken mummy, a man whose face seemed ready to separate into dirty brown ribbons. This cunning old bookkeeper had been thrice convicted, once of embezzlement, once of extortion, and lastly for forgery. He was sixty-five, and had spent twenty-two years as a guest of the Republic. Stéphane knew all this. He was determined to have an accountant that could neither squeal nor betray nor blackmail. He was on parole and the next offence would surely send him to the pepper plantations in New Caledonia for life.

In the middle room he placed, in the exact centre, his typist, Mlle Crunèche. She was fifty-two, a triumph of pompous spinsterhood. She spoke in orotund epigrams. She was of that strange collection of old maids who make up their sexual deprivations in

buxom flesh, and take out the loss of men in eating chocolates. She ate where other women loved. The customers of the firm who got by the sexagenarian bookkeeper looked at this hundred per cent unattractive lady and decided there was nothing fly-by-night about M. Sabatier's enterprise. Besides, what does gay Marseille expect of Protestants? Beauty?

Once installed, Stéphane summoned his mother. On Denys's lazy advice, she got rid of the pathetic grocery store for what it was worth, two thousand francs. She was properly installed in the pre-tentious Avenue du Prado in a decent five-room flat, a veritable junkshop of sideboards, wardrobes, chiffoniers, marble tops and birds under glass, together with pictures of Arabs, Capri fishermen, and Millet's *Angelus*.

He got her (the dream of her life) an old bundle as a servant, one Augustine, four feet ten, hunchbacked, simpering, scampering, petulant. A perpetual series of complaints about the cost of living at Marseille kept the two kitchen people going for hours. Stéphane loved to listen to this pointless talk; it was as good as a vacation.

Stéphane had done well. His business was taken seriously now that he had a fixed home at Marseille. What better guarantee of security than an old mother? He spun about the possibility that in business the day may come when you must "pull" something. Mother is a good façade. Who would want her to think less of him? Secondly, he really worshipped his mother and wanted her to have a sturdy old age. He wished her to be free of a cadet position as against the Renouviers. No one overshadowed her as in Béziers. Thirdly, he knew that without a home basis, unstable Onésime would slip again. He hated that boy for outdistancing him in the race for the Renouvier dowries. He was going to soap his stairs but not so that anyone, even Onésime, could credit his having done so. Frantically ambitious, burdened by little scruple, workmanlike as he was, Marseille opened well for him.

Within a fortnight, although his business was small, Stéphane had acquired three friends. The first was Melchior Aboudaram from Tunis, Jew, descendant of the legendary rabbis of the Barbary realms, of the golden, scented isles off Sfax and of torrid Tripoli. Aboudaram, perfect Roman nose, polished skin and manners, highest references, soft, warm with the love of luxury that swam in his jet-black eyes, walked as one in *The Perfumed Garden*. He was decked with rich obscenity, and every alternate year or so was beguiled by

the "ideal woman." On her he lavished all he had and all he made. As each lady dished her spoony, the uxorious man plotted, connived and betrayed for long periods, so as to amass another treasure to lay in the lap of some other plausible, willowy, blond Delilah.

The second friend was Prosper Scaramanga, born in Marseille but whose parents had come from the resort island of Corfu. This Ionian sybarite seemed to walk in a circumambient haze of raisins, olive oil, muscat wines and olives. He epitomized the products of the hot lands, of the paradise isles. His nose was moulded like a sleek candied date. His alternate occupation (trade was his ostensible source of income) was that of card dealer at the strange casino of Scar-faced Justin, hard by God's Hospital in the Old Port. He buzzed in and out everywhere. Accordingly he became one of the characters of the city. He was permitted to filch mussels from the cadaverous itinerant fishsellers without their having the right to complain to the police. His past was shadowy, his present shady. He generated suspicion. His body smell was that of frying bacon in maize fat.

The last friend was an enigmatic Italian, Gabriele Spoturno-Maglioni, born in Bastia, Corsica, but of Livornese origins. His mother had been the servant of a family that played *écarté* with the Bonapartes in their picayune court at Lucca. That, plus his Corsican birth, made him a fervent Bonapartist. He was a plastic fellow, given to strange disappearances. Whenever some rich lawyer or perfume manufacturer or dramatist or police chief in Paris, anxious to sit in the Senate or Deputies, desired artistically arranged elections in Corsica, his agent invariably was this same Spoturno-Maglioni.

His associations in Marseille were equally strange. They consorted with his stiff, glossy-starched shirt front, barred in thin horizontal purple and cream stripes. He was tall, pock-marked, his eyelids hung over his expression like those of a sleepy camel. Mother Sabatier dreaded his visits. His noise at soup-eating was really thrilling, a new dimension in that much practised art.

"These three rascals are either up to something profitable or a competitor's spies," thought the avid, bucolic Stéphane. "By following their tricks intended to ruin me, I will learn something about business in this fair but slippery town. As to their chances, oh, la la! I am more Tartuffe than they, I am certainly more of a

Bel-Ami." He loved to ring changes on his villainy, like Richard III in Shakespeare's early tell-tale method. He was proud of his newly acquired viciousness and patted himself on being a careerist.

He scribbled a brotherly note to Onésime:

My Dear, Dear Brother,

At last! Installed in a suite of three offices with Mother beautifully taken care of in the Avenue du Prado. I am taking her down the coast to Monte Carlo, next week. We are using a Lancia I have acquired as part of our business equipment. It is fitting that at least one of us devote some time, in token of gratitude to Mother, since you are so much given to artistic insistences.

By the way, what are you doing? You live with our cousins, still, I suppose? Of course, I dislike the position of client in a great house but, dear Onésime, everyone to his own devices. Each for himself and God for us all, as the diplomat said. Still love must prove a more substantial diet than I had thought since it so amply compensates loss of independence and work.

I assume M. Renouvier has you in mind as his field foreman? But that would scarcely correspond with your position as his future son-in-law. Let me hear from you. Mother sends a thousand kisses.

As ever,

Your devoted brother,

Stéphane

He posted it, approving of himself. "Knowing Onésime's simple make-up as I do, I regard that as the letter of a master. It will pull the underpinnings from that jerry-built soul."

The letter did the expected. It disorganized Onésime. He had been fretting at his constantly delayed marriage. Old Renouvier put forward a host of irrefutable, trivial but recurrent reasons for delay. Onésime had been collaborating with the old expert, Char-donnoux, whom he had called in on the hyperacidity of the grapes, but now that interesting work bored him.

Cécile and he could not be indiscreet. Frustrated in activity, love, marriage, the systematic sabotage of the rich was beating him. Her wit, devices, and éclat were above his. He grew pessimistic.

"I aim high. But where is my charm? She is a great personality

I never emit a spark. Why should she love me?" He thought seriously of her shameless trick on François. It showed possibilities he did not wish to explore.

One night, after a boring family game of halma, and with Stéphane's oft-read poison letter in his pocket, Onésime, alone with Cécile, poured out the sap from his drying heart.

"I loved you, dearest, I plagued you, threatened you. Now I am afraid I imposed. The courteous enmity of your family may be wiser than you. Your life will be a peg lower than it ought to be, if you marry me. I . . ." She got up and left the room.

In the foyer she sobbed. Onésime rushed to console. "My God, why do you think so much?" she kept on between sobs. "Yes, I am bright, but I'm no old philosopher. I'm a child, just eighteen, Onésime. We played on the Plateau of the Poets, chased around trees and bushes. I made posies, drew chalk games on the stones, and you were so kind. All my childhood, you were there to make me happy. I, why shouldn't I love you? You have loved me so much and so long. I know I'm pert and love a good trick. But I'm not important. I flash, I am sometimes an imp. So I beat you in each move. But it adds up to nothing. You are deeper, more important. I see it with the honest eye of love. Onésime, beloved, think no more of yourself, think only of me. I shall cry if you speak ill of yourself." She was now recovered and consecutive. "Papa must hurry our wedding. You and I can do nothing in this house, it's driving us crazy. Papa secretly wants Gisèle to go off first. She is so humiliated, poor thing. That's at the bottom of all this but I'll stop it. Be patient, we shall be happy."

Like all good advice it bore sour fruit. Onésime thought of it without understanding her deep springs. He saw gratitude and passion but it must end in a short-run marriage. Convinced in his quaint conscientious way that he must do nothing to diminish Cécile's future brilliancy, he left. He wrote her she was now free from being kind to him because of his importunities. So he slipped away from marriage as he had slipped away from home. What sage said that we are forced to do everything twice?

The dusk found him at Marseille. He got out of the station, uncertain, ashamed to call on his family and tell them the story. The night was turning deep black; the stars were gaining in brilliancy as in a speeded-up film. He went down the side steps.

The seething slums of Marseille squeeze into their streets a hun-

dred thousand dark-eyed children, chatterers, romantics, rehearsers of crime and criminal circumstance, clattering about brothels and taunting the fat ladies offering their billowy breasts, lace-bordered, through grilles, to the fascinated eyes of woman-hungry sailors, the sallow regards of broken-down dope peddlers.

In the hallways after sunset, discreet and proud young dolls stand, dressed in lavish and apparently luxurious furs, even on tropic nights. They are usually seventeen or so, massed with paste jewels. In front of the many bars sit their more dowdy sisters. Shopworn they look and their thin favours are for sale at bargain prices. Their loosely associated pimps, their fingers nervously closing imaginary penknives, sit at separated tables and await their chance receipts. They are invariably dark, thin, sleek, jet-black-haired, coifed in curls, glossed and perfumed with Argentine brilliantine. They are a true breed of dogs but with mongrel hearts.

The police parade up and down before the frowned-on traffic with insouciance. The ladies of the town urge their claims and unscroll their attractions, by teasing, taunting, mocking, guying, entreating, whispering, blowing kisses, beckoning, winking (both the quarter-eye French and open styles) or, as with the older ones, by hoarse oratory or vituperation. Such is the Rue d'Aix, such are all the straggling streets that mount with lascivious indecision the steep hill to the Gare Saint-Charles.

From many doorways there emerge coal-black Negroes, giants of the Arabian nights, lords of the Red Sea, capacious and practical as eunuchs of the Grand Turk; their biceps are as powerful as those of the Mohgrabi that wield bastinadoes on the pilgrims to Mecca. Other Negroes circulate, lonesome, svelte, trim little fellows, with shiny shoes and pin waists, and, more common, long-faced tubercular workers on the wharves, cracked in health by the fierce exigencies of white employers. The compact, child-sized Indo-Chinese are everywhere. Lascars pass them by without notice, and consort at the bars with *pionpions*, in superb Arab cavalry costume, of the Sahara battalions of France. Genteel, homosexual Algerians steal in brocaded slippers and shroudlike *burnous*, go by the imploring streetwalkers, and keep their soft gaze transfixed on the sad fez-crowned faces of their loved companion in Allah, their brother of the thousand delights. The perfumes of Tunis are wafted along the thin-slit Middle Sea, and they are foundered in the rank garden of garlic and the fetid smells of the acrid City of Departures.

The swish of an Arab sheikh's robe is heard. The children wild with mischief advance and pull the fringe. The volley of Hamitic and Berber curses is their expected reward. The youngsters are merry, noisy. Children mostly of Neapolitan immigrants, they have further acquired the filthy vocabulary of the men of the True Faith. They hurl back their ordurous words at the aristocratic visitors from the lion courts at Fez. The children break up and laugh at everyone. They extract opium from the scholarly pockets of the mandarin. They steal it to pass it on to their older brothers, famed pick-pockets. The gold and silver and copper, fished out of the pockets of victims of tawdry strumpets, passed through turned panels, go to the politicians who allocate the spoils in the gaming clubs of the Old Town, reverberating to the maddening clatter of cranes, bridges and port machinery.

Into this city came Onésime Sabatier of the virtuous life.

He crossed the animated highway near the Hôtel de la Poste, full of continuous cheap shoeshops. Behind the Hôtel was a series of small hotels in houses that would have been chosen as fitting abodes by Mr. Edward Hyde, the creature of Frankenstein, Jack the Ripper or the vampire of Düsseldorf. They were cheap, Onésime was out of money. Ever considerate, he would not disturb his family at night, and so he registered at the Hôtel Miséricorde.

From his bug-infested bed he looked out upon a street built to suit the genius of a Méryon or Poe, grey-white, receding walls, windows that slanted back along the walls and thinned at their tops, large eaves, with slender warped chimneys. His bed was under the sill. The lights from the well-to-do Hôtel de la Poste blinded him. There was no shade.

The Hôtel Miséricorde swarmed with people, heavy steps and light steps, voices of every timbre and in every speech, coughing, sneezing, yawning, calling of card numbers, toasts in brandy, quarrels about women. It was a deep submarine society, but however submerged, it had shoals of dark life. In every room a small image of the Virgin was placed on a shelf, for the benefit of Italian sailors who wished to light their votive candles. Time and again the door of Onésime's cubicle would be forced open and some massive form would mutter insincere apologies.

The exhausted young man fell into a sleep, his prudence beaten by his drowsiness. His dreams were appropriate, he scaled houses a thousand feet high, white, but the houses were on an incline of



one in three, so that the task was easy. On these houses thousands, soon millions, of men and women were crawling; nature endowed them with many legs; they had alpenstocks and stabbed them into every window ledge to hold fast as they got along from one group of inclining casements to another. He woke shrieking, a victim, of course, of the omnipotent bedbug. His skin, a mass of tiny bites, looked like a battlefield in Lilliput.

Over him were two men, one a Mongolian or Manchu, the other a Hova from Madagascar, not that he knew they were this, but his blinking eyes soon made out exotic origins. They had long knives, held him, turned him over, searched through his bed for something of value, apparently narcotics, mumbled in a *lingua franca*, that they had made a mistake, went into the next room where a terrible shriek told Onésime they had found their man. He dressed, then rushed into the corridor with his everlasting paper valise, and there, on the folding bed, he saw, outstretched, a giant Negro of the Ivory Coast type. Beside him, dead, was a prostitute of fifty, her phthisic cheeks no longer her threat, her old straw hair no longer the toy of halfpenny clients. The Negro was alive, groaning, blood flowing from his ribs, his drawers covered with his gore. He cried out, "Great is Allah and Mohammed is his prophet," in bass Arabic.

Foolish Onésime ran down, aghast, to notify the police.

At the door the landlord smiled. The landlord was quite gay about it and said, "Is it for dreams like that that you disturb your sleep, Monsieur? Go back, it is scarcely dawn and make up your night's sleep. Go upstairs and you will see you are the victim of an illusion."

"Not at all, I saw it but a minute ago."

"Very well, then, I shall mount with you." Onésime suspected a trap. He accepted, but he followed the landlord on the stairs, so as to be ready for any trick.

They came to the very room where the Negro and his woman were assassinated. It was undoubtedly the same room. The folding bed was neat. Beautiful white sheets, scented with lavender, dressed it. A soft cassimere blanket, baby-pink, was tucked around. There was not a sign of disorder. Onésime looked about. He had left this room but two minutes before. There was the picture of the Eiffel Tower, there was a chromo of night in the Tuareg desert. He was mystified but noticed a large bloodstain under the bed, right under the fold of the blanket. The quick-change chamber-

maid or manservant had not done a perfect job. He appeared to smile, but again glanced under the bed, and saw it was a fresh stain.

"Monsieur," he said, "I will never again be so foolish as to trouble a serious business man like yourself with my silly dreams. But my sleep has been interrupted, the dawn is up, I am taking the first train to San Remo (out of France, he thought, that will please this rascal) so that I might as well toddle off to the station." He was artless and engaging. The landlord was delighted at the perfection of his *mise en scène*, in concealing the night's horror.

As he got down the street, relieved, a well-dressed young man followed him and stopped him on the Cours Belsunce. "You went through a nightmare or hallucination last night, I am told. A Negro and a prostitute? Never let fancy take the place of fact. No, Monsieur, it is a sign of character not to nurse one's neuroses. Silence is recommended. The best therapy. Don't forget it. If I need you to remember it, remember. Only then. They were mine. I don't need your name. I never forget a face. The milieu knows you from now on. They will ticket you anywhere. Now just stroll along, not around here, but saunter up the Cannebière."

Onésime was thankful for his consideration in not inflicting a permanent silence. He respectfully said good-bye. A night in Marseille and already he was marked by the milieu! The police were nonexistent. The stories he had read about the closed civic system of the underworld, then, were correct. These gangsters had a parallel state, code of ethics, penal code. He was under their protection. He was faintly entertained as he thought of how modern society has replaced the old sanctuaries. Old London had its Savoy, Alsatia, Whitefriars, whereas to-day these sanctuaries are not limited to certain quarters but extend to every house in a city. He was bundled with cutpurse and bawd in their refuge from outside law. He too was exempted from the warrant of bailiff and constable by the customs of an outlaw empire!

The dawn moved from tepid nervous Nile green into an unequally fugitive unconvincing Copenhagen blue. The misty sun came up dog-tired for his daily task. He was obviously bored with the silly spinning earth. It was close. The smell of horse dung, petrol and garbage vans remained in suspension everywhere. Straggling, Onésime, looking back every few moments to see who was following, crossed to the Rue Saint-Louis, ambled with leaden soles towards

the Préfecture and woke up at nine, having had a deep sleep in its gardens. A gendarme shook him. He saw that he was in the Place Saint-Ferréol where were the offices of his brother.

He followed the staircase, large, sumptuous, red-carpeted, with exquisite nymphs in bronze holding up sheaves of electric bulbs. Stéphane had not yet come in, but as Monsieur was his brother he could enter the main office and wait. He sat down in his brother's cosy chair for hypnotizing visitors and nearly dozed again.

Suddenly a brusque voice called out loud, "Stéphane, I've got a special shipment for you. Good, two-year-old stuff, Cap Corse, eighteen degrees, shipped by my uncle from Bastia, a find at four hundred francs a hecto." He stopped, looked about, surprised that he had been talking in the air, and saw Onésime. They looked at each other. It was the elegant young criminal that had accosted him in the Cours Belsunce that very morning.

The young man bowed and said, "To whom have I the honour?"

"You told me only three hours ago you had no need of my name, you would never forget my face."

The man blinked, confused. "Pardon, Monsieur, to my knowledge, I have never met you. Allow me, at least for one, to give my name, Gabriele Spoturno-Maglioni, wine dealer, Bastia."

"Come, come," Onésime insisted, "you are the very person. Tall, pockmarked, heavy-lidded, your shirt front identical, your voice, I think, the same or similar."

"A frequently made mistake," said Spoturno-Maglioni, the picture of jollity. "There are three cousins of mine, the Bentivoglios. They are my dead spit. We share our vendettas with them and our shirt fronts are our uniforms against the accursed Lucchesis who have stolen our estates. Antoine Bentivoglio is my double, wraith, what you will. A bad egg, too, I must admit," he smiled easily. "My friends call me Antoine the *nervi* to tease me. As to pockmarks, my good friend, what Corsican is free of them?"

It sounded plausible. The more he insisted the more Onésime began to note differences of voice, manner, even cuffs. His natural reason rejected a coincidence so remarkable as that the author of a hotel crime and a solid merchant of wines were one and the same, and both encountered in a large city, in action, by a newcomer. The throw of the dice was a thousand to one against.

Stéphane breezed in like an American success type who has just finished a personality course. He greeted Onésime, Gabriele; was all speed, decision, freshness. "Well, well, Onésime, never expected to see you so soon. Where is Cécile? At the hotel, I suppose. I'll call on her later on. Well, my young brother, how do you like the big town? Think of it, only a few short months since I thought Béziers the point around which the sun rose and set. Are you here for a long visit? Mother will be glad. Why not go up and see her now? I'll be busy for the morning. You look dead tired. I suppose you caught the Toulouse local, the milk special. Third-class too, I know you. Even with Cécile's money. I'll telephone Mother you're coming. Avenue du Prado, 66, second floor. She'll be overwhelmed. When are you going back?"

Stéphane looked triumphant. Onésime was afraid of this barrage. Was this the brother who had come with him into their home, humbly, trudging in sabots, not so long ago? Was this Stéphane of the blue blouse, the modest, practical, thorough workman?

"I came without Cécile. I will explain later when we are alone. I stayed at a miserable hotel. I came late and would not disturb you. It was an underworld hotel. I spent a hideous night, I am unstrung."

"Wouldn't disturb us! Always a *timide*, always a victim of fears you invent. Mother would have danced to see her boy interrupt her sleep. As to the underworld, get that out of your rural romantic skull. You always were a daub artist. Marseille is a city of commerce, banking, chemical industry. Its near-million people cannot subsist on crime. It is full of crowded, dull middle-class and workers' districts as sorry as Manchester is, I suppose. Not a bit of colour or crime in them. Get your mind off the exceptional sides of life. My dear brother, concentrate on the normal needs of people. That's merchandising, that's where the money is. For one pickpocket there are a hundred labourers, for one prostitute, a hundred housewives buying celery and gingham, brooms and school slates. A thousand sparrows for one kite. I have a sense of proportion. I don't waste my time thinking of anything that doesn't get me a point further. Here is a letter from your esteemed father-in-law, intended, I mean. It reads: 'Dear Stéphane, you surprise me every day. Keep buying, first-class connexions. I never thought you had it in you. I wish Onésime had a tenth your go,' and so on, blaa, blaa, blaa. You see, Onésime, the world dearly loves a winner."

The younger brother was in no mood for the interminable sermon of a self-satisfied parvenu. He dug at Stéphane, "How hard you have become on three months' annealing." He choked. "I hope Mother hasn't been changed by Marseille, too. Phone her I am coming up, her farmer boy from the provinces. Tell her I hope she will be glad to see me, even as a failure, thank God!"

Stéphane was unaffected. "Go and rest your head and cry on her breast. You are a baby, not a man."

*The Caverns of Monsieur Pressensé*

TEN months later, three cronies of Stéphane sat hunched in a dusty office before the hectoring merchant prince, M. de Pressensé, a Ferris wheel of open hands and clenched fists.

"One year in Marseille," he thundered at them (a squeaky thorax can contain thunder), "and that Béziers whirlwind has carried away my house. He has beaten me to a point where the Banque Privée has advised me they are going to close me down. Twenty million francs and countless drachmas and piastres gone up the waterspout to be conveyed to M. Renouvier who hasn't even invited me to a good dinner for all that money. To-night is quick-thinking night. We have thirty days to live, the banker-executioners kindly tell me. You theatrical imbeciles. I depended on you to crush him. No, the more imbecile I. He who trusts fools is one, I am a coward to pass on blame. To think I have survived the competition of Fabre, Fraissinet, Messageries Maritimes, the Transatlantique, every ship-owner in France, only to fall down before the petty upstart house of Renouvier, Sabatier! God, just after I was putting that blasted Jew, Lévy-Ruhlmann, where he belonged."

"You forget yourself, Monsieur," coldly remarked Aboudaram.

"I beg your pardon, I meant no anti-Semitism, Melchior. But Lévy-Ruhlmann was so sure he would get me, he poured out his gold to corner me. I was winning, beating him, when this damned Sabatier, this Cevenole bumpkin, upsets me. And I hear he is denting Lévy-Ruhlmann. That's what the Bourse thinks to a man. Well the damned Jew deserves it; oh forgive me, Melchior, I meant no anti-Semitism."

Melchior was quiet: the Aboudarams had fine racial intestines. They had been digesting insults for a millennium which they converted into the droppings of Sephardic pride.

M. de Pressensé looked finely and fondly at the lists and plans of the ships he had chartered. He wagged his head. "Your criminal talents. My cohorts! I could pick up any boy reader of penny

dreadfuls and do no worse. Here you are, silky Melchior Aboudaram, crazed with pride, you Prosper Scaramanga, into whose texture is woven Greek duplicity, and you Spoturno-Magliani, dagger-bearer of the Hôtel Miséricorde, you Corsican misfit. My roll call, my awkward squad. All three of you boast of your tricks, pin medals on each other in your mutual-admiration legion of dishonour, and I," he was quiet in speech, "I, soon to be cashiered out of commerce. I, once President of the Chamber of Commerce! What an end! At sixty-five. To wind up my days keeping a boarding house for foreigners in Nice, a seedy, *gaga* reminiscer. Or to sell wines on commission for some pitying former competitor. Why don't I go down to the P. & O. docks, get on a steamer, join the British Sahibs on the way to Bombay and jump off some dark night? Those foggy people understand the spleen, they comprehend suicide. But no, that's rot. I'll think, think."

The old capitalist closed his eyes and hummed to himself. The office had that intimate air of after-hours, when the staff have left and the boss and his associates laze about talking about the essence of the business and not its day-by-day details. Pressensé swayed round and round on his swivel chair. He blinked and relapsed into thought.

Xaver de Pressensé was the last ripe fruit of a sturdy but rotten tree. He came of a seven-hundred-year family of Cahors that had given statesmen to the Church. Famed in the Middle Ages for usury, Cahors had, in the De Pressensés, a family distinguished for rapacity even there. The family also was known for its constant division into three segments, celibacy, vice, marriage. His brother was a bishop, he a priest of the countinghouse. He looked the part. His face was as compressed as that of Blaise Pascal. Like him, he had the expression of a celestial hunchback. He had surrounded himself with three detestable men out of necessity, exactly as an elegant German bank magnate leans on a mattoid Nazi chief. Diseased situations bring about strange hospital bedfellows.

The conversation went on until the morning. Pressensé got to the centre of the business. If he regained several customers "stolen" by Stéphane, he could flourish their contracts before the Banque Privée and so be refinanced. So he sent his emissaries on three missions.

Aboudaram was to insinuate to importing firms that the wines sold them by Sabatier were substandard. They had the government

seal of quality attached only because of bribery. Would they please demand a chemical test? M. Aboudaram would be happy to be refuted. He would rather see these rumours disproved. But he owed it a duty to his clients to advise them that such stories were circulating. In the meantime, why not protect their position by dealing with their old, satisfactory connexion, De Pressensé?

Scaramanga had a more unpleasant task. He came of a family of shippers and knew every chartering clerk on the coast. He was to bribe the chartering clerks to pass all their shipping contracts to De Pressensé, giving Sabatier and Lévy-Ruhlmann the go-by. This was constantly being done. But De Pressensé pointed out that now he needed contracts so badly, to bolster his crumbling credit structure, that he must get absolutely all the invoices even at a loss.

Scaramanga whispered that it was rumoured that Sabatier and Lévy-Ruhlmann alike had a secret consortium with that Greek syndicate that had cold-bloodedly sent all their sailors to the bottom in 1919-1921. If the London insurance agents at Marseille were questioned, one of their bribed underlings was to speak for the underwriters, and reply cryptically, "I cannot anticipate the decision of the home offices in the matter." That would give the impression that there was a question concerning an issuance of policies, although no one had said it. No shipper could take the risk in the meantime.

"I like it," Scaramanga was wrapped in an oily smile, "I like crime by assumed implication. It's refined."

"And safe," sneered Spoturno-Maglioni. "My idea is more direct."

"That means stabbing or beating up?" De Pressensé was worried.

"You know Chrétien, the delegate of the wharf-workers' union? Well, he owes ten thousand francs gambling debts to my chief. There's the port inspector, that socialist rat, Torloni. He's in our pocket. Now we'll work the pressure and get the union boys and the socialist red-tape babies to blackjack anyone that loads any ships but ours. Why? We tell them we hear from Paris that they are going to load the other boats with blacklegs and no union longshoreman can turn his back to solidarity. Now for the tugboat captains and canal lighters, they'll just find it nicer to hold Sabatier's shipments beyond demurrage dates, over the penalty time when the contracts will be outlawed. We've got this humanitarian bunch of cheap politicians all sewed up. Until to-day, Boss, you have been against



my playing the last card because you don't like the strong arm. But what else do you propose? If the competition can't ship they're through. No customer invests in excuses."

"Good work," Pressensé authorized the thug. "When these difficulties will be so strangely synthesized, who should show up at every office but old fox Pressensé, who has just made an occult combination somewhere which enables him to give seemingly crazy rebates? After my competitors' funerals, I can hold up the helpless shippers for what the traffic will bear. In the meantime the dear old Banque Privée can pay for my come-back with the deposits of M. Lévy-Ruhlmann and M. Sabatier."

The four left the long stone warehouses of De Pressensé et Cie, along the Quai de Joliette in the outer basin. It was high morning and some of the staff had begun to file in. The three bravoos were escorted by their master in his sumptuous cedar-lined Delage town car. It was an unusual model, no longer made up. Stéphane saw it whirl past to the Hôtel Impérial. He watched from behind a lime tree and noted the quartet going to breakfast. His education was complete.

That afternoon Aboudaram began his "sinuendoes." But the firms he called upon had received, by messenger, some time before noon, photographic copies of M. Aboudaram's commercial records, judgments, bankruptcy (fraudulent), supplementary proceedings, distraints, alimony defaults, petty offences, fines, together with well-documented files on his private morals. They were beautifully reproduced by an offset process, handsomely bound, and quite clearly had been the objects of a long preparation. The stammering Tunisian tried his silky defamations but he knew that his value to De Pressensé was nil. But for some reason, though, he was not much worried.

Scaramanga had only ten thousand francs with which to carry on his bribery campaign. Every shipping clerk had already received three times the most he had at his command, and that before eleven in the morning. They had been delivered by bank messengers in their admirals' chapeaux.

For the whisper about the uninsurability of his vessels, however, Stéphane had made no preparation, for that was an unexpected move. But as soon as he heard of the rumours, he came thundering into the offices of the underwriters and had them post up a notice in the Bourse that certain malicious rumours were circulated and that they were not only without foundation, but that Sabatier's boats

were A 1. The subtle clerk who obeyed Scaramanga and worked his cryptic reference got the sack for his flyer in villainy.

Spoturno-Maglioni was temporarily much more successful. His criminal associations were outside the early training of Stéphane. The last villain in his Sunday-school education was Judas Iscariot. But one thing Stéphane remembered: a long rambling tale about Onésime having met Spoturno-Maglioni outside the Hôtel Miséricorde after a murder.

It took some time for Stéphane's detectives to accumulate the evidence against Spoturno-Maglioni. He had lied to Onésime. The Negro and prostitute were not of his gang, they were interlopers. The struggle had turned about the smuggling of tungsten, iridium, platinum; new compact valuable commodities. But while the detectives were building up their edifice, brick by brick, Stéphane's house was being torn down in the same slow way. The terror reigning on the wharves and canals had cut down his business by half. Yet somehow Lévy-Ruhmann was doing well out of it all and poor De Pressensé had not got an extra order or credit despite his success.

Solomon Gerson Rom-Bom Lévy-Ruhmann was a trick. He was born in the gabled town of Colmar in a cot bed in an attic, an old Germanic attic; he was cramped for room all his life. He was reasonably tall, with a monstrous Adam's apple, a goitre stare of his blotched grey eyes, ulcer-indicating cheeks, caricature Jewish pear-shaped nose, hooked, with curlicue nostrils, but his spindle legs made him look like a scrawny hungry chicken or an Alsatian stork discouraged after a lifetime of depositing skinny babies.

Yet this man was head and front of the mercantile interest of the immensely rich city of Marseille. Trained to the rabbinate, he was as subtle as the line on a slide-rule cursor. At twelve he had digested the Torah, the Mishnah and Gemara, the commentaries of Maimonides (hence his name after that thinker's sobriquet Rom-Bom) and of Rashi and, above all, he knew by heart the *Shulhan 'Arukh* of Joseph Qaro, the Justinian of Jewish domestic law. He was expert in the digitally illustrated wisdom of the commentators on the glossators of the expositors of the critics of the students of the amplifiers of the authors of what isn't so. But, more important, at five he was a virtuoso of the abacus, at seven he had mastered arithmetic.

He was king of copra and arachis oils, lord of Marseille soap. The world cartel in Liverpool and in Rotterdam was limited in its

monopoly by this one capitalist. The cuisine of the European poor employed his salad oils more than all others combined. He owned floating docks at Buenos Aires. He had grain elevators at Karachi, for the increase of the Indus valley. His seed-crushing mills at Madras were the true temples of the Deccanese peasant. His essential oil factories were spread from the Spice Islands to Bordeaux. He considered Pressensé as a stuffed shirt, Sabatier an entertaining school-boy whose thinking was merely *ad hoc*. He had never been in danger as Pressensé loved to think. He toyed with competitors by whispering confidentially that he had been got one day on one transaction and another day even worse in some other city. This misshapen man had married an Italian Jewess of a family whose origins were lost in the remotest traditions of the Synagogue, Rachel Ottolenghi, of Mantua. They had sixteen children, twelve living.

This perpetual procreator and amasser of money was a hoarder of more things than children or cash. He gathered paintings (confined to those that were rich, Venetian, oozed surplus), richly bound books with exquisite scrolls and legends, porcelain, majolica, agate and jade, cornelian and amber. He hoarded the precious metals on principle, and his shifty eye looked straight at diamonds. He created a labour agency that spied on competitors from Tonkin to Casablanca. Wherever the French flag waved, his villainies waved beside. He viewed his crimes as did that amateur finance-monster, Barabas, conjured up by the uncovetous brain of Kit Marlowe. He took a pleasure in his own victories but, unlike Barabas, he refused to gloat for he feared a jealous God.

This God he supplicated in an obscure synagogue where, pacing to and fro before the Ark of the Law, he mumbled the praises of his Creator. He observed the circle of tribal ceremonials. The circumcisions were done with an embossed knife from the ghetto of Damascus, the *bar mizvah* speeches of his hopefuls with rich, forensic bromides; his daughters were married under highly embroidered canopies set on four poles made from the cedars of Lebanon; he arranged his embraces with his wife to suit the cycles of the moon as prescribed in Leviticus. He could not believe that his heavenly tribal chief would ever desert so faithful a treasurer.

He heaved the rock of faith at his light-brained foes.

His lieutenant was Melchior Aboudaram, triple-crosser. From him he received detailed reports of the plans of Pressensé and Sabatier.

Aboudaram was happy to follow his own, especially to a profit. Lévy-Ruhlmann needed no other traitor nor, indeed, any help in scheming. Pressensé, he knew, would be done in a month. But Sabatier? Renouvier had recovered his investment and the new firm had made five million francs besides. It was not speculative. There was no hope it would lose its money in legitimate business, so Lévy-Ruhlmann bethought himself of crime. Distasteful, but business is an unforgiving master.

The *Lucie de Lamoille*, ten thousand tons burden, crack freighter, was to sail in ballast for Aleppo within the fortnight. She was chartered by Sabatier. She was to refuel at Famagusta in Cyprus. The plan of Lévy-Ruhlmann was neither bright nor complex. She was to sink slowly through some mysterious but minor explosion which would set her hold in flames. This would occur just as she entered harbour, in British territory, subject to a Board of Trade report. The crew would have good time in which to escape. No human damage done. Lévy-Ruhlmann had a horror of sacrificial offerings. Somehow the binder for the insurance would never have reached London, therefore never have been accepted by the co-insurers at Lloyd's. Sabatier would have paid the charterers. The loss would wipe him out for, under Marseille customary engagement, he was responsible for insuring the ship until it was redelivered to its owners.

Three days before the Banque Privée loan was due, Pressensé, wild with grief, paced about the high vaults of his mortgaged wine cellars. The catacombs of insolvency were covered with cobwebs, the reaches of his mind were dusty. He had damaged Sabatier, true, but to no good end. His own business was slightly improved but he was still millions short of meeting bank maturities. He had written to two brothers, one, Bishop of Carpentras, the other a retired capitalist, a maniac on entomology. He received affectionate letters, full of the powdered milk of human kindness. Both tendered him a home in case of misfortune, the bishop with his spiders, the entomologist with his bees. But what Pressensé needed was spot cash. He had not dared dismiss an employee nor reduce overhead while playing to impress bankers with his bettered condition. His venture must sink in the slimy seas with full flags flying. He had given word that if any of his three confederates arrived they were to be sent down to the caverns. He preferred not to be seen everlast-

ingly with men of that type in his public offices. They came down into the caverns together.

There the four went over eleventh-hour desperate expedients. Both Spoturno-Maglioni and Scaramanga were ready to give Pressensé the go-by unless he put up fresh cash that evening. They now felt they had betrayed the wrong man in attacking, instead of selling out to Sabatier. The prestige of Pressensé had fooled them. Aboudaram was unnaturally calm. The other two rightly assumed that he had feathered his nest elsewhere. While Pressensé was urging them to concentrate, they were thinking of how to extort money from the sly Tunisian.

In the evening, in the caves, the four baffled men kept on spinning futilities. They were gradually made aware of other shapes in the dark passages leading to the central wine chamber. Spoturno-Maglioni took out his revolver. When he saw it was merely a large detachment of police he was relieved. That meant safety: his crowd, the socialist mayor, the prefect, the police were all one happy little nest of friendly condors. What had worried him at first was that there were enemies sent down by the still tougher opposition mob from the Rue Élysée des Beaux-Arts at Paris.

The police detachment had large torches, electric searchlights, lanterns, which kept illuminating the casks of *vin ordinaire* and flashing about some drums of peanut oil. The police sergeant of the Old Port advanced towards the four. Behind him was Stéphane Sabatier.

"Gabriele Spoturno-Maglioni, alias the jackal, alias Antonio Lucchese, alias Jean Carcopino, alias Fritz Lahm, alias William MacDermot, I arrest you for the murder of the Negro, French citizen, Miti, and his mistress, Angélique Barbier, in the Hôtel Miséricorde. There is no need to resist, you are covered." Gabriele laughed. What was this, a hoax of the mob for somebody's birthday? A trick to conceal something else? For how could one of the unofficial government of Marseille be arrested? With his confederates in high office? With so much "on" them?

His social education commenced then and there. He was to see on the guillotine that there is only one jealous government, capitalism! He would learn that the independent gangster state is merely a pitiful enclave, permitted to dramatize itself only so that it may the better function as an irregular aide to the rich and powerful. The payments by the Renouvier interests and, unknown to everybody, by the Lévy-Ruhlmann treasury, had finished the inflated sneak. The

assizes in Aix-en-Provence were ready for Gabriele; his head was already in the basket.

The other men shifted nervously under the police guns. Was there to be only one arrest? The police sergeant went on, "Prosper Scaramanga, you are under arrest for forging a letter to Lloyd's conveying false information concerning the insurance standing of the boat *El-Arash*. You are held for a felony. In view of your previous record, you know what this means."

The police chief handcuffed the two men to each other. Aboudaram was safe, he comforted himself. What had he done recently? Then came the bombshell. "Melchior Aboudaram, I arrest you on the complaint of M. Lévy-Ruhlmann."

"Lévy-Ruhlmann?" Aboudaram bawled, "Why, he's my chief." It was the worst slip possible but surprise had bowled him over. Both Stéphane and Pressensé glowered at this filthy fellow.

"I repeat," the sergeant went on inflexibly, "under arrest. You stole from the chamber of M. Lévy-Ruhlmann a bronze statuette which you sold for five thousand francs to M. Crémieux, the antiquarian. He resold the statue to M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. M. Lévy-Ruhlmann always has a charged camera in his wall, it is set every time you enter. The picture shows you abstracting the statuette, a mere figurine, and placing it in your coat. Another camera, placed by M. Crémieux in his shop, to prove he never acts as a 'fence,' shows you offering it to him along with other objects."

"*M. le Commissaire*," Aboudaram faltered, "it's a vile trick. He gets rid of me so that I cannot testify to what I know of him. But I shall talk, I shall. They'll hear from me."

"If it were a trick," said the police chief, "who told you to fall into it? M. Lévy-Ruhlmann, however, was ready for your charges. What do you know? He asks you to speak."

Aboudaram, shaking, fell silent. The grand capitalist divided his criminal department into airtight sections. Melchior really knew nothing. The silky lad at large merely would have interfered with a rich man's comfort. No nasty aftertaste to conspiracy was wanted.

The three cheap criminals were led away to contemplate the true foundations of society in their cells.

The police official was asked by M. de Pressensé, "And I assume that you have not been so forgetful as not to have a warrant for me?"

He replied politely, "How can you say this? A man like you, M. de Pressensé? I leave you with my compliments. Au revoir."

"Au revoir," called out the quiet master of the caverns. Stéphane was leaving with the police.

"Just a moment, M. Sabatier. Would you drink with me? You knew that the Banque Privée would not give me a day's extension or a sou of credit after *Le Radical* screams this story in its night headlines. Your triple arrest was so slick, so perfectly arranged. Permit me to offer you the feeble congratulations of a dead man."

"Why, not at all," Stéphane said mockingly, with a fine rascal's indifference. "I arranged for but two of the arrests, the third was a coincidence. M. Aboudaram's relations were a surprise to me too."

"You seem a very assured young man. You have a Borgia fear to drink with me?"

"Not when witnesses to our meeting have just been present."

"Touching, I shall be pleased to drink with a guest who feels himself safe."

Stéphane smiled. He was no coward and relied on his hard shell to beat the tricks of De Pressensé. Besides, he was a perfect winetaster.

"I toast your forthcoming ruin by Lévy-Ruhlmann," De Pressensé said sweetly, lifting up a small glass of 1870 Armagnac brandy. "I have a presentiment it will be soon."

Stéphane sneered, "And I lift my glass to the most inept prophet in Marseille." Their glasses clicked.

Stéphane escorted his host to the street and motored with him to his home. There, at the old gentleman's request, he waited until De Pressensé's butler came down with two large valises which he deposited in the rear of the limousine. They were marvellously sewn bags, needlessly ornamented. He had been a very rich man.

They motored to the station. "Do not be disturbed, M. Sabatier, I am an older and wiser man than you. You have crushed me with your new, naïve energy; you have my respect. But I am merely your understudy, doing a rehearsal for you. I am fading out as though I had never been. The phantom capitalist, I leave ships, factories, vaults, mansion, this car, to my creditors. I have on my person three thousand francs, a gold watch, my wedding ring and, in my large valises, enough clothes to last me a few years as a pensioner in my brother's home. I am no longer cast down. But

observe my gracious exit, boy, and learn from it. Lévy-Ruhlmann was in the picture to-night. That means you are finished. He moves quickly. You may be surprised in several hours. His rattle is heard; he is about to strike."

"Will you please stop ringing the changes on your compensation theme?" Stéphane said. "You bore me; I am not amused."

De Pressensé mounted the train stair. "I leave with ill will towards you, expressed quietly. I invited you to hear this last word." He refused to shake hands and shuffled into his second-class carriage. "I will read the newspapers for the next few days," he chirped from the window in the departing train.

Stéphane could not but admire the *sang-froid*, the remarkable ease with which De Pressensé bore the catastrophe. He had been prepared for a long, hectic battle. It was over. He admired the manner in which De Pressensé hinted a come-back strong in vengeance. He whisked away his prophecies but found he slept uneasily.

In the morning Stéphane decided to take the offensive. He called on Lévy-Ruhlmann at nine. The bulbous-eyed crane regarded him with an undersea glint. He went out of his way to look like unreliability itself, he put his fingers together, while he greasily rubbed his two thumbs and then circulated them about each other. He hid cautiously behind his antiquated steel-frame eyeglasses. He spoke like a maxim.

"I suppose Pressensé told you stories about me last night; not to rejoice over his elimination, for I had something worse in store for you. Or something like it. His favourite yarn. I am sure of it. Didn't he?"

Stéphane saw he had lost the offensive. He parried. "I ask questions, I never answer them."

"Not bad for a beginner." Lévy-Ruhlmann smoked his cigarette in porpoise style. (Old military stuff, wear out the other fellow on the attack while you prepare.) He became precise. "See here, I don't care what you say, you came here because you were told to look out for me and wanted to move first. Pressensé! A gangster and friend of gangsters, tied up with the whole rotten political, labour, criminal machine here; unable to win except in fixed horse races; blames me, the damned hypocrite, for unfair competition. He hires Spoturno to sandbag the officers of your ships. My offence. That I used silly Melchior to get me information. For your hurt? No, for my defence. In return for the pay I gave him what does he do?



Steals my property. And all this comes to what? I that have been robbed and cheated, attacked by the lowest criminals, I am guilty, I am to be condemned on the mere word of a proved scoundrel! I'll beat you on price, terms, rates, credit. I'll try to get your agencies, I warn you. I don't want Renouvier in my roost. I hope to knock you out. I will, by God. But business is one thing and crime another. In this stinking city I have kept clear of its cheap politicians. I don't care whether you believe me or not. Now do me the honour, you who were never asked here, of getting out."

Stéphane looked hard at the choleric actor. "Your oaths make me sure you are a liar. You warn me of what you intend to do to me because you have already done something worse. I now know how anyone as rotten as you must behave. Damn Pressensé! I suspect you on the basis of what I have found out in the last few months. You are tied up with the whole counterfeit socialist crowd in this city, you who told me you don't like politicians. The prosecutor, that flamboyant Paradol, is your tool and frames a dozen men a year to suit your book. Files disappear, fingerprints are missing, and I guarantee they are in safety-deposit vaults in another country. That's only the beginning of what I know about you. That's the only part of the story I want you to know I know. Your weary game! It's as easy traced as the hyena's footprints and as wobbly."

"Thanks awfully," Lévy-Ruhlmann nearly whispered. "You miserable boy, if you had any brains at all you would have shut up. You had to show how clever you were, what you had in your cards. Thank you."

Pressensé was wrong. It took fully three days before a newspaper item appeared that was relevant. It read:

## EXTRA! MARSEILLE BOAT EXPLODES, FOUNDERS IN FAMAGUSTA

CREW SAVED, NO CASUALTIES      LOSS LIMITED

*Vessel in Ballast. Renouvier interests charterers. Fully insured.*

### Testimony of First Mate (Exclusive)

FAMAGUSTA (Cyprus). A mysterious minor explosion amidships, foundered the *Lucie de Lamoille*, Marseille register. Shipping men are stunned. The harbour master and the Governor, Sir Claudius Whibley, cannot account for the explosion. A few drums of calcium carbide may have been stored

carelessly near water and a casual match have caused an acetylene explosion. The sinking was slow. The sailors had time to save even their personal belongings.

MARSEILLE (8 A.M.) Lloyd's at London are without definite information as to their liability on the *Lucie de Lamoille*. M. Sabatier is conferring with their local agents. An announcement is expected.

Stéphane was not worried. He prepared at once to go to Famagusta with the damage assessors. He was sure they would appraise the loss at least at the sum he had guaranteed her owners. Even allowing for premium and settlement costs, he might show a slight profit.

But the binder, issued in Marseille, had never arrived in London. His cheque had not yet been cashed at Lloyd's. The insurance had not become effective. The binder was good for two days, covering mail time to London. Four days had elapsed. Stéphane was frantic. It had been posted and registered. The binder had disappeared somewhere between Marseille station and Calais. The railway mail clerks were examined but could throw no light. The envelope was missing at Calais, that was all they knew.

Stéphane's firm owed six million francs to the Société Générale des Armateurs Réunis, the owners. Four fifths of their share capital, in bearer certificates, were held by Lévy-Ruhlmann. Sabatier, Renouvier et Cie thus handed him back all that they had made. The firm had enough working capital left merely to continue as a small house. It was practically finished in the Marseille market. Stéphane had only the melancholy satisfaction of having repaid Renouvier his investment, if not a profit.

Stéphane Sabatier walked out of his useless office into the sunny, floral Place Saint-Ferréol. Unless Denys Renouvier helped, he was done in. He pondered but was too dazed. He was too realistic to indulge in any dreams of rascalities à la Bel-Ami to punish Lévy-Ruhlmann. He understood, with clean intelligence, the nature of the unconquerable forces that had humiliated him. If Lévy-Ruhlmann's scheme was not clever, merely vulgarly criminal, it was that capitalists, as powerful as he, did not waste their time in being clever against moderate-sized enemies. These great concerns were conservers, not hunters. He was not even angry. He was chagrined, that was all.

He walked about the Place Saint-Ferréol several times. The flower markets were richly supplied. Hyères violets and St. Tropez mimosas, northerly stocks and cyclamens were crowding each other on the stalls. The busy trams and buses clanged in and out of the place. The lazy eagle in the coat of arms of the American consulate drooped or slept. The heavy dome of the Préfecture squatted. Its ponderous flower-beds, its overcivilized lawn, were the decoration of the universe of Lévy-Ruhlmann.

The place was shielded from the sun by a score of gaily coloured awnings with advertisements of absinthe drinks. Underneath them, at that hour, women shoppers by the score, waiting for the proper conveyance to take them home, fed ice creams to themselves and grenadine and Perrier water to tired, nervous children. Apart from conductors and drivers, Stéphane was the only male traversing the place that afternoon. It soothed him, in his ruin, to walk among so many people who could not have understood what had happened to him, try as they might. It reduced the importance of his collapse. The common touch was his anodyne.

He went into a barber's shop. He needed someone to shave him, to massage and shampoo, to try his everlasting salesmanship on him, anything to take up his attention. To his irritation the barbers were buzzing about the double sensation, the fall of Pressensé and four days later of Sabatier. He listened carefully afterwards. Their story of his collapse, based on no knowledge, seemed at first ridiculous. It was a stupid fairy tale. Later he thought it was equally true; it simply was another approach. He, too, did not know the whole story as it was seen by some god. These random deductions kept him from going mad, as did the memory of the dignity with which Pressensé had stepped out of his role, as a rehearsal.

That afternoon he telephoned M. Renouvier at Béziers. He spoke personally to the butler, Firmin, practically his godfather. He was not surprised when told M. Renouvier was not in to him. He then did many foolish things. He wandered through the vegetable markets, then sauntered near the cheese and fruit stands. The amazingly varied shapes, colours, odours reawakened the dormant artist and so he ate the immaterial banquet tranquilly. The insults of good-natured but bargaining housewives, hurled at red-cheeked costers, and their crude replies gave him a false feeling that he too was alive. He stiffened and walked into Barclay's Bank. The manager told him that his firm was in good shape although bunged

and still enjoyed a good, though much reduced credit. His acceptance credits were still accounted very good.

But, as he stepped out into the blaze of the street, he realized that, like all men who are through, he had passed the afternoon in fiddling consolations. There was no real hope. Wearily he collapsed into the ultra-futurist Pathé salon to witness a performance of *Mädchen in Uniform*. At the suicide attempt of Manuela he gave way and walked out sick.

Night had fallen. He found his mother at home, absorbed in reading of her son's crash in the *Petit Marseillais*. Nothing was said. It was a silent supper, early bed.

That night Renouvier came to Marseille. He went straight to the home of Lévy-Ruhlmann (invited). The Bacchus of Béziers had lost a half-interest in five million francs to his host, but that was the fortune of war. Renouvier had no time to see his lame-duck associate. His name, thank God, had not suffered. He could easily withdraw Sabatier from the firm and replace the capital.

Lévy-Ruhlmann began with quiet fatherly unity. Every point he made was illustrated by a new gulp of his Adam's apple.

"I am a father of sixteen, M. Renouvier, four in blessedness and twelve with me. You are the father of five and I hear that one of your children has been deserted by a Sabatier. I hope this information is in error. Your other daughter, Gisèle, I am told, has lost two years waiting for the success of this futile Stéphane Sabatier. I do not wish to seem harsh, Monsieur, but you deserve it. He who relies on the poor relies on a broken reed. The righteous do not beg their bread. God delights to honour those that obey His law. That is our religion, I am sure you agree."

"Experience agrees," Denys Renouvier concurred.

"I am pleased. A drink, Monsieur?"

"Always."

Lévy-Ruhlmann pulled the cord. "You owe something to your children, Monsieur. Now two men like ourselves, of full responsibility, large capital, family men, in fact, two of the most substantial men in the South, we ought to be associated. I need your shipping trade. You have every reason to handle, as part of your large organization, oil, copra, spices, ground nuts, grains, seeds, in the Southwest. I offer two and a half million francs as my cash contribution, you offer good will and connexions."

"Which means," said Renouvier with a smile, "that you are

returning my share in what you took from my company in Marseille and keeping Stéphane's. So it is I who am contributing experience, organization, and your capital as well."

"I never put delicate observations differently from my guests," Lévy-Ruhlmann said smoothly. "But to the proposition. Is it sound?"

"Good," Denys Renouvier beamed. He reflected: This Marseille crash pays me a profit. I get back the use of my share that was lost. Lévy-Ruhlmann cannot afford my enmity. But he never would have come to me unless he had ruined my firm and now he wishes to avoid hard feeling. The weapon that bunged Stéphane boomeranged back to benefit the rich.

"Well," he added, "for more than a year my gay Cécile, once gay I mean, the toast of Béziers, sits and mourns like Ariadne in Naxos. You know the tale?"

"Of course," Lévy-Ruhlmann's scholarly pride was affronted.

"A Racine play, a veritable *Andromache*," continued Denys, parading all his knowledge, for Lévy-Ruhlmann's prowess in letters was a byword in trade circles. "Nothing contents her, she moons after that dull softie, Onésime Sabatier. He has disappeared into the air, where I hope that stupid Stéphane will join him. No man of my station should be moved by young men's aspirations. It confuses business with charity."

"Charity should arise out of business profits," Lévy-Ruhlmann corrected.

"I have had a salutary lesson," said the contrite Denys.

He left by the night train. The next morning Lévy-Ruhlmann summoned Stéphane to yield his half-interest in the concern. There was no refusal possible. He informed Stéphane he was now Denys Renouvier's agent. Heartsick at the admirable trade-unionism of millionaires, Stéphane sent in the documents by his secretary, her last duty. The offices were assigned to M. Lévy-Ruhlmann's nominees. The great adventure was over.

The flat in the Avenue du Prado was given up. The landlord claimed the furniture under the unexpired lease. He lamented that it was not enough to cover his loss and swore that he ought to avenge himself on the "swindler." Mother lost Augustine, her servant. Their bawling was frightful.

Too proud to return to a grocery business in Béziers, Mme Sabatier at last consented to do what she had sworn she never would.

She was installed as a worker in the Home for Pastors' Widows in the river-swept Protestant town of Montauban. Her eyes were red, not for her poverty but for her son's buried hopes, her other son's disappearance. The sun always shone for Renouviers, hid behind a sable cloud for Sabatiers. "We are not in His grace," was her only moral. She meant her God, friend of St. Augustine and Calvin, who span the world and its human lice only to torture them forever. He had a strange idea of fun and she of justice.

Stéphane was alone. Broken up by his commercial disaster, his early courage gave way to dull despair. The serious, practical man showed the same Bohemian streak as his brother. He could not enter the business game again, this time as a poor clerk or a salesman. Business was a Palace of Illusion, a gallery of distorted mirrors, where for a moment you are a giant, elongated to three million francs, but is of no substance, for the next mirror shows you a pygmy, worth one franc, and at last you walk out into the fresh air and discover your real stature, that of a man with his endowment, apart from money.

He took the train for anywhere. Avignon? Why not, let it be Avignon. It was near, cheap, yet well away from Marseille. He sat in the wooden-seated, rickety, third-class local train carriage and cried to himself. "Onésime, Onésime, why was I so rotten? Why did I insult you? My brother, my poor brother, you alone are my likeness. Mother is of another time and mind. No one else cares. Onésime, why did I write that letter, why was I so low?"

Passing by, a few miles above Marseille, a train came down from Saint-Gilles bearing Onésime. He had read of his brother's crash and came, as always, when there was trouble. In the immensely long tunnel under the limestone mountain the brothers missed each other. They were going in opposite directions, but spiritually to similar destinies.

*The Arlésienne*

WHO among the Frenchmen of the South has not been haunted by the *Arlésienne*? The tender tale of old Daudet belongs to the undying stories of undying love. More pastoral than Peer Gynt, it answers the same need. The girl that reflects youth; the right of man to desert this simple ideal for the rich experiences of maturity, the evil of men, the uncertainty of women, and then, in the evening of life when the heart again is simple, for the wanderer to be wedded to the waiting love—she who gave up the day for dawn and twilight! Performed in every state theatre, with the two suites of Bizet's music, the haunting melodies of the region polished and amplified, the *Arlésienne* is the perfect provincial stereotype.

The song of *Mireille* of Mistral, whose materials are not dissimilar, is the Iliad of the youth of old Gallia Narbonensis. They fervidly believe Frédéric Mistral to be the most persuasive mind of the nineteenth century, its consummate poet; his language the sweetest cadenced, his philosophic import is heard scales above a Goethe. He resurrected a language, he gave pride to a small people at the crossroads of Europe.

Like Palacky in Bohemia, he revived a defeated race, he initiated the epoch of conscious nationality. When all ambition gravitated towards Paris, when the life of the South was ebbing into the ministerial swamp of the Rue de Rivoli, the humble farm boy of Provence sang a song so mighty that a whole people was shocked into beauty.

Laid in the Camargue, its odours are those of the hundreds of flowers and grasses of that solitary region, its quality as unique as the flora of the delta. And of this land, the capital is the old Republic of Arles, civic delicacy of the Romans, burgherly stronghold of the Rhône valley, city of Dante's perfervid praise, blazing subject of Van Gogh. No wonder that the people of the district are convinced that the mother of the poet Mistral bore him with ease and welcomed his delivery with full-bellied song. For there is woman's stuff in the song of this hardy people.

Youth dreams of the women of Arles. Their profile is the

memory of the Hellenic interpenetration in that region. Whether or no the traces of Massilia are genuine, whether the Temple of Artemis was erected by faithful Ionians in the isles of the Camargue, the Greek blood must have been spread here, for the women of Arles are the only authentic Greeks of our time. Where the Romaic girl of old Greece carries Macedonian, Slavic, Albanian, or even Osmanli traces in her varied features, the beholder looks on the girls of Arles as he does on the terra-cotta maids of crater and amphora, the fond objects of Keats's polished ode. Their faces are sad, their noses overshadow no happy lips. With them shape is the joy of the spectator, he sees form in olive tint. It is a land where women's faces, the colour of the hills and the fruit of the olive tree present a synthesis of earth, plant and humanity. Their women are as famed for their chiselled manners, soft speech, gracious clothing, as for their graced features. With them life could be stately.

The city is intensely aloof. In the days of Charlemagne, Europe fondly believed that Roland and Oliver were taken out of the horror of the Pyrenees to be laid here and that the ten thousand paladins of Charles the Great were brought here by the angels to sleep in Elysian peace. When William of Orange, root of that tree to overspread Europe, conquered the Saracen at Arles, so grateful were the cherubim that from the skies they transported beautiful tombs in which sleep the happy Christian warriors who fell in the victory.

The decaying town of Arles, clustered with dilapidated Roman monuments, once pride of the urbane proconsuls, was brought to a second life by the Dutch painter Van Gogh. Here, in its sun-drenched lands, he found the subjects he required to patine his evangelical gloom. He saw poplars, heather, garden flowers, rivulets and meadow grass with a direct eye. His paintings of Arles became part of the heritage of the race.

In the high city of New York, the tenement boy, under the long span of the Williamsburg Bridge pores over the reproductions of the tiny canal drawbridge at Arles. In millions of comfortable homes, in all the cities where European man has pressed grass with flagstones, as middle-class families sit down to their varied national dinners, the pictures of Arles smile above them and pour sunlight into their stuffy lives.

Unable to trace his brother, the lazy mind of Onésime traced his failures. Girl-intoxicated, he cast about for some new love. Only



by way of a woman could he find salvation. The spoony thoughts of Onésime were soon bound to Arles. Where does the man of the South look for love? Arles, of course. Either with the wonderful woman of the crumbling intramural city or with the many gipsy girls that camped about the town. Citizen or nomad, Greek or Egyptian, they were all fit goddesses in the sentimental Olympus. If the Protestant missionary, Van Gogh, could find temporary refuge from the torments of the psychopathic, a fellow Christian might test the same place.

Onésime went over the regional newspapers every day to see whether he could earn his bread at Arles. One day he read a simple advertisement.

WANTED: young man, thorough knowledge wines, especially vintage wines. Experience absolutely necessary. Best references. Also deal wood, charcoal, etc., as side line.  
WRITE: Évariste Lamouroux, Poste Restante, Arles.

He wrote a letter, erased, revised, recopied many times, recounting his experience since he was twelve and citing Chardonnoux as his last reference. No mention was made, of course, of the Renouviers.

His offer was accepted. He came to Arles, found his way to a yard under the railway culvert, walked through a neglected garden crowded with mangy sunflowers, and entered the small stone house that squatted uneasily over the cellars of Évariste Lamouroux.

Father was out, a young lady told him. He looked up at her. At first he was not moved. She was about twenty-four or -five, possibly more. Her face was all that men come to Arles for. It was Greek but the profile was the rather over-refined one that stamps the inferiority of the more nervous Hellenistic art to the perfection of the Athenian golden age. It interested Onésime, for the classic city had women of a more nervous type than he expected.

But, as he sat waiting for M. Lamouroux, he kept on studying the mobile face as it reflected her work and thoughts. Soon it did not falter but was quiet. She was writing bills for her father and making entries in his capacious journals. Her expression was far away from the concentration of a penman. Her face was tragic, composed. He saw that the nervous qualities of her profile were not present full faced. If her features were overelegant, it was not due to a scattered nervousness but to beauty overripe.

She stood up. She was nearly as tall as Onésime. Her face altered with her stance. It seemed shorter when she sat. Now it summed up her long body line. A Botticelli dress helped that impression. The girl took her inspiration, clearly, from the paintings of that prince of costume designers. She was clothed in green with a slender black suède belt, a gold brooch, shaped like a curled serpent with two minute rubies for his eyes. Her heels were gilded. They were ceremonial with her warm scarlet slippers of fine brushed velvet, trimmed with gold braid.

Onésime wondered at this unusual dress for a young woman doing accounts and letters for a father in the wine business. The dirty surroundings were especially inept. She smiled at his obvious impressions. "You are astonished to see me dress this way, Monsieur?"

"Frankly, yes. It seems, well, out of place. Here I smell coal dust and wood, you look, if you pardon me, like a lady walked out in full stride from some illuminated manuscript. Why?"

"'She walks in beauty like the night.' You know the old song?"

"You walk in beauty like the full moon. That is still finer."

"Monsieur, I am a painter, a designer. I design my dresses and I make them, too. I use the large plates of Octave Uzanne that I got when I was eighteen. I copy from his plates, adding some ideas of my own. Oh," she said irrelevantly, "you will like to work here. It was I answered your letter. So careful, so serious. You noticed the woman's handwriting?"

"Pretty. And style. But I thought it might be the Arles idiom."

At that moment, M. Lamouroux came in. He was a ruddy fellow, large, wore an immense hat, that of French strolling musicians and of singers in cabarets. He had large yellow moustaches, spoke in a large tone, swept about with a wide cloak, held the centre of the stage as by natural right.

"This must be the young fellow that I accepted for the post. How do you do, sir." He offered his hand. They shook. "I offer you a thousand francs a month. Let no one say that Évariste Lamouroux is mean to employees. The unions here ask for eight hundred and fifty, but I give a thousand willingly. Fair-minded on principle, that's me. As to the hours of work. Ah, that's different. I am in love with work; it is a joy to me. Your reference was

excellent. Professor Chardonnoux speaks well of your competence. Do you know the charcoal and firewood trade too? No? Well, that's the easiest part."

"I like charcoal sketches, that's why we're in the business," chirped the young lady.

"Allow me to introduce you. Mlle Simone Lamouroux, my daughter by my first wife. My second is also in a happier world, Monsieur — I did not catch your name, I do not recall it rather."

"Sabatier, Onésime Sabatier."

"Huguenot?"

"Of course."

"I'm a militant atheist, young man, damn superstitions. A follower of Hébert and Chaumette, great honest thinkers, those. But I'm broad-minded. Sunk as you are in the night, you are nevertheless welcome here. I deprive no man of his bread because he is ignorant of the teachings of the immortal Darwin. The era of enlightenment will soon convert you."

"But Monsieur. I am a freethinker."

"*Tiens, tiens*, you must smile at me for my hasty assumptions. No matter. I am for the right." Another series of fraternal handshakes was gone through and Onésime was launched on the twelve-hour day, but with a man of principles.

His work skilled, his application good, Onésime proved satisfactory to slave-driving Lamouroux. The boss was himself a fanatic. He had built up a moderate fortune and was determined to make it a competence and retire to a *mas*, an isolated farm in the underwoods and brush of the district. There he would spend his time gardening, hunting and playing at bowls. To get to this aim before sixty, his aged manservant, Désiré, his worker, Onésime, and his daughter, Simone, were hitched to his ever-rolling chariot.

Months passed in that fashion, but Onésime, as with Jacob, could labour long for his Laban, if he was to receive the daughter's favour. She was not too well disposed at first. She watched him to see if he was a proper man. His silence, brought about by childhood loyalty to Cécile, stood as a barrier before the first capable woman to watch him freely.

Onésime knew he must be more of a man. He was now nearly twenty-three. He could no longer be the receptive boy, the *tabula rasa*, on which were imprinted feminine excitements. One afternoon, as the account books were being closed, he spoke up.

"Simone, I have wanted to speak to you for a long time—May I?"

"I know what it is." Simone was offhand. "I had begun to wonder why you were so slow in making me your confidante. And now, please, your confessions!"

Onésime murmured, "Of course, Simone, I am unworthy."

"Do tell me how unworthy you are." Simone was tart. "No, let me lead off in the confessions game. I have given myself to two men. These lechers began with your pretty little speech, confession, their need for an inspiration; that was me. The only way I could properly soothe their spirits and elevate their souls was on a mattress. Strange beginning. Well," she spoke hurriedly, "I suppose that I wanted to listen to their story or I wouldn't have given in. But what galls me is my absence of taste, not what I do. I'm no vestal virgin. But to be like a crummy priest listening to second-hand suburban sin! That is vulgar, detestable."

"What a soap bubble you have blown on nothing at all! No, I have no life history, just one girl, one real girl . . ."

Simone was earnest. "Go on. And I am the other?" She was still and he was silent.

She arranged two Bight of Benin bracelets carefully, one had a frog as a pendant, the other had set into it, incongruously, blue plaques with embossed Wedgwood figures. She kept playing with her ornaments until Onésime plucked courage.

He took her right hand and held it softly, spoke no word, then bent down and kissed it gently. He kissed each one of her fingers as though he were playing the scales. He caressed her long pear-shaped hands, he impressed his full lips, softly, tenderly, long, on the base of her well-polished carmine nails. He left the thumbs alone. They were gross pedals to the octave. He then toyed with her bracelets and began, "Simone, I must learn to speak. Now I ask you, do you want silence? That's what I want."

She balanced two sentences. One was to ask him if he didn't think the taste of her nail polish too acid. The other came out.

"Let's walk into the sunshine. It is still very light. Perhaps Papa will stay away, he won't notice we have left early. Let us go into the wheat fields. An office is a shoddy place for confidences."\*

They stepped out beyond the railway culvert. She gave him her arm. They went slowly, lovewise past the goods yards. From there the town of Arles seemed a continuous assembly of railway

roundhouses. Limestone heaps, crumbling houses on hills, both of limestone, rounded forts covered with ivy, square *donjon* keeps; it made a strange compound of ashen greys; the world turned into a cemetery. Their hand-in-hand slow walk led them to the Aliscamps, that field of ruined headstones where, in the thirteenth century, the great of Europe wished to be buried, the home of Dante's infernal imaginings. They dared not enter its now innocent promenade but struck out in the opposite direction for life.

The sun went down, the chill of sudden night came on them. Simone's long dress was inadequate. She huddled for warmth into the arms of the unspeaking man. She was enough of a romantic Frenchwoman to thirst for the wonderful gush of rhetoric of Cyrano de Bergerac, to cry out to any man who said, "I love you," "Is that all? Is there no more than that? Pour out your flood of metaphors, build up figures of speech, stretch similes to the full, call on the subtlest reaches of the mind and extract from them the rarest words. Or else I hear the love lisp of a dullard." She worshipped words in love as much as a downright Englishman thinks his girl would despise him if he spouted.

What they call a windbag she termed a sackbut, where they feared such a man would be a sissy in football, she believed, as in the Olympian games, in the poetic skill of the athlete. She worshipped the prowess of the talker, the man who rhymes as he crosses swords. To tell the truth she longed to be talked down, to be silenced.

Not for nothing was Edmond Rostand a son of Marseille. He knew the women of that region when he wrote the speech of Roxane.

She waited but the speech never came. Onésime was happy as he held the head of this sensible girl. She closed her eyes as if she hoped for him to be bold. Soon she was tight asleep while he wondered at how so poor a gardener held a golden apple in his lap. He thought over how little he knew of her. She was everlastingly at work and she had never revealed anything that went on in that ever active mind. He sensed the wealth, the range of her interests. Why did she not speak? Was it that she thought him pedestrian? He was; he was ashamed.

She dreamed, for the fancies tumbled at once behind her closed eyelids, that the two men to whom she had given herself came down from the dark skies and faced each other with pistols. They were in a soap bubble, reminiscence of Onésime's remark. Their forms and weapons were hardly distinguishable in the spectrum. They

swam about the soap bubble but never caught up with each other. Her hands reached out for the bubble. She would seize these midget men, take them out of their insubstantial bit of soap and air, and watch the toy lovers shoot at each other. Suddenly the bubble split into two, both turned and aimed large duelling pistols directly at her. Each pistol went off with an absurd click or report, scarcely audible.

She awoke slowly, lazily, and was happy as Onésime kissed her breasts. He had unhooked her dress and was stealthily pressing kisses too soft to be resented on her large firm nipples. She fell back again and searched the heavy, widely dispersed clouds, fleecy with rain, their rims taking the moonlight as a fugitive frame. The nightingale went through his song, the hands of Onésime caressed her breast or toyed with her hair. Her Pre-Raphaelite dress had cunningly concealed the fullness of her breasts and so Onésime was fascinated by a revelation. He covered her face with pouts in his steady natural philandering, he slowly brushed her eyebrows with heavy lips. She laughed a short happy giggle as he licked her eyelashes, spat out the mascara and laughed at himself. They lay under the sweet-cherry tree, his blue blouse wide open at the neck, her long green dress creased, the moonlight yellowing their bright tints.

It was midnight now, not that they knew it. The grass was dampening, the rain must come soon. Not even their perfect poet's idyll could withstand the discomfort. They ran through the mile between the field and Arles, then crossed the scurrying Rhône, filed through the absolutely quiet streets, heard the baying of a lonely dog forgotten by his master, and saw the preoccupation of an intense tortoise-shell cat watching a rathole like an astronomer seizing a new and dimly placed planetoid, and alas, saw the clouds float away. They had been cheated of love's reward.

They came into the public place. Here and there some families were still sitting about on the chairs taken out of their kitchens. They were whiling away the night in long concordances, amplifying each other's innocuous remarks. There was harmony, the harmony that dwells in warm nights among those that have drunk beer.

The young pair sat down on the stone benches and looked at their neighbours, who in turn saluted with the civility of small-town residents. Everyone pretended to notice nothing, for the scandal could wait for to-morrow night's dinner. It was an old city, they had time. No newspaper speeded them. Love was an oft-told tale, a staple.

On the stone benches Onésime confided to her that he was, like herself, fascinated by painting. He built up an ideal programme. He would learn to paint, that study interrupted when the storm-laden visit of Cécile took him from his even course. As he spoke to Simone he rubbed his eyes. Where was he? Hadn't he delivered that same speech before to another lady in another place? He stopped. She looked suspiciously, she sensed it was a rigmorole.

"Why not go to Paris?" Simone asked. "That is where I want to go. They tell me of the girls studying art there, earnest, taking the prizes, yet free, running in and out of the small student's hotels in the Rue Bonaparte or scampering through those Renaissance courtyards of the Rue de Seine, unsurveyed, the rivals, equals, lovers of men. Paris! That's the young girl's dream. No family. No Papa. Liberty, creation, fun, food." She waved her belt.

"Not for me," Onésime was downright. "Perhaps for girls, but I am free here. If I am not somebody, it is my fault. I feed my roots in the vineyards. I would be blind without the terrible sun of our country. Let Northern artists paint their landscapes seen through veils. Let them praise the Dutch and the Belgian schools with their sad canals and their pencil skies. I have seen English paintings with their melancholy overtones. Let them keep the delicate trees that lead half-lives. Give me this scorched country, give me the trees that wilt from heat, but while they live go into the centre of our eyes and dance there! I am a man of the South. Forty-five degrees of latitude is my pole. No Northern Paris for me, never."

She put her arms about his waist and murmured, "You're a fine original boy."

So the next day when they worked, the roller of wine casks and the bookkeeper looked at each other not only as lovers but as members of the artist's fellowship. Simone, imperious, witty, fiercely ambitious, kept her fires stoked for she was pleased with Onésime's comradely talk. She forgot its thin quality. She remembered what is dearest to mortals, that fundamentally he agreed with her.

So the love affair grew gently like a plant on the slope of a volcano. The very richness of the lava that makes it so fine a soil comes from the same spout that may destroy it.

*Aquaria Supersede Dowries*

"My daughter Gisèle is a well-bred girl, not like those tramps that fall in love," M. Renouvier congratulated himself in a conference with M. Lévy-Ruhlmann, now his associate in a wide range of business.

"That reminds me," clucked the rabbinical stork. "I have six sons and six daughters whose births were arranged as in a pattern. The first-born a boy, the second a girl, and so by odds and evens. The four who died were two boys and two girls. So, for every dowry I give there is one I receive. In this I see the dispensation of God for it is much too regular to be accidental."

"It is surprising," Denys agreed, "but what are you getting at?"

"This," he explained. "The eldest of my children is Rashi-Mordecai. He is thirty-one, unmarried. Foolish boy, he sought the army as a career. This despite the warning in the fate of Alfred Dreyfus. My son's military record is admirable. He was a Polytechnique cadet, and, though a boy, he gained a military medal at Verdun. It was he that planted the famed land mine called the Jeanne d'Arc because it was exploded nearest her birthplace at Domrémy. I haven't mentioned him much to you for I am not proud of dragoons. A soldier is an idiot. Anyone who chances death while the men back home make money should never have been born. But such he is. He lives in Mantua with my wife's relatives, the Ottolenghis, who, although Jewish, seem to be wearing swords in perpetuity. I do not understand this, M. Renouvier. Israel's mission is peace. I am like the son of Abraham, a man of peace." He blew his praise.

"People who have no country don't raise armies," Denys smiled.

"To my story. If you will consider marrying your daughter to my son, Rashi-Mordecai, I shall waive the two millions *dot* providing she is guaranteed her ten millions inheritance. I would



rather establish my son in Italy so he will not be tempted back into the army. Mantua is a strange city, surrounded by lakes, full of distinguished Jews. The Lorias, for example. Now my son holds first rank there socially. If you make this match, I can have him ennobled if he accepts Italian citizenship. The Fascist secretary who sells titles has made me a passable quotation. So I can make your daughter a contessa. The setting would please your heir, François. He must love Italy where authority, hierarchy, class co-ordination are imposed and where an imbecile like him cannot be questioned by the poor. That is termed social synthesis by my banking friends at Milan." He laughed but it was the grimace of a bitter animal that knows how evil are its thoughts. He played with his immensely heavy gold fountain pen. Clearly he had not begun to tell the whole story. M. Renouvier waited.

Lévy-Ruhlmann was dry, direct. "You object to my race, M. Renouvier? Or are you afraid your family will object? Speak freely. I am accustomed to living for years with my associates only to discover I am not as good as they are. My milliard francs do not buy me common humanity. That is harder to obtain than diamonds."

M. Renouvier decided on straight talk.

"M. Lévy-Ruhlmann, I am a provincial. I speak plain. If you will show me your financial position, audited by outside persons nominated by me, our families shall be united, race or no race. That is, I assume that your son shall not prove wholly unsuitable to my daughter. François is a Royalist and hates Jews. He has cuffed them and committed mayhem on them in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple in Paris. It was the Saturday morning sport of the young bloods of the Paris law school. But his anti-Semitism, I assume, has a cash limit. A milliard francs is certainly beyond the horizon of hatred. With that amount of money, I can guarantee he will positively love Jews. Do not trouble yourself on that score, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann."

"I trouble myself on no score, nor will I show you any statements. My son is my son and my business is my business. We may become relatives and together bless our grandchildren. But I show you no statement. I waive the dowry. I want my son to settle down as a landed gentleman. He is not built for business, and I don't want to think of him as carrion on a battlefield. I would rather see the kingdoms of the earth go down than hurt one hair of my children. The army horrifies me, although I am told I would

not have a franc without it. But enough of this gas. I would like Gisèle to meet my son at a reception at our winter home, Avenue du Césaréwitch at Nice. Is it agreed?"

Allying himself to one of the richest men in the country and with no dowry to pay! What was Lévy-Ruhlmann's game? Was his son diseased? But he was willing to exhibit the merchandise first.

Lévy-Ruhlmann knew what Denys suspected. "Why do I do this, M. Renouvier? I want my son happy. I want him to marry a gentile. Strange in an orthodox Jew? But you see that boy wants to be a French army officer, an Italian aristocrat, anything but a Jew. Despite his name, eloquent of our traditions, our liberator from Haman, our most celebrated French Talmud student, he wants to be one of the *Gerim*, outside our gate. So does my Adèle. The others are proud of our people. They will marry only their own. Now, whom can I let them marry, if not a family like yours, of Huguenot descent but indifferent to religion. If I marry my son to Catholics, they will want him married in church or the children baptized. That I could not survive. But with us it will be a civil marriage, the children neither baptized nor ritually circumcised. If my children leave the ghetto, at least, I am not humiliated."

"It is strange," Denys remarked, "you, one Frenchman in three hundred, member of a tiny breed, you it is that feel humiliated at union with the dominant religion, race."

"Remember my youth." Lévy-Ruhlmann was reminiscent. "I was brought up in Colmar in Alsace. That town is more German than any other, more German, I believe fervently, than even that toy city of Rothenburg that the sentimental Franconians have preserved. In the winding streets of that fourteenth-century city, I walked under its overhanging eaves; as I went along the little boys threw stones at me. We were under the Germans then; the *Judenhetz* was everywhere, in school, army, playground. I trembled when I passed a group of little boys, led by the mitred bishop in full canonicals, carrying his crook, looking for all the world like St. Nicholas. I was told by my chum, Moses Dreyfus, that if the shadow of the cross ever fell upon me I would become a Christian. There was only one way to exorcise that terrible danger, to spit as the shadow fell on me. Otherwise, he told me, nuns waited at every window to come up and take the involuntary convert. It was the Jewish myth, equivalent of the equally crazy ritual-murder nonsense of the gentiles.

"Remember that the Rhineland teems with these beliefs. Everyone remembers the Agents of Death with pale faces that came to our tables on the Passover and extracted a dead Christian child from underneath. In Bingen, Worms, Mainz, Colmar, Basel, the dread story is still told. They tell us that the enemy will rise again in the land, tear us from our homes, cover our philosophers with yellow gabardines, give the leper's bells to our scientists and poets. Do you see how I have been made into the Jew I am?"

"Thank God, I live in rational, radical France," fervently interjected Denys. "We too were persecuted but such things are over now."

"Not so soon. The white terror in Nîmes after Waterloo, that is of yesterday, I am still not too sure even in the Midi. So that if my son is married outside our faith, let it be into a rationalist family. M. Renouvier, the richest Jew has to remember something else than that he is a man, a citizen.

"When I was thirteen, it was the day of my *bar mizvab*, my confirmation in our faith. It is the great rite of passage, it celebrates puberty. I had prepared a polished speech, as learned for a boy of thirteen as Christ's at twelve must have been to astonish the rabbis. I was headed home and passed the museum when it rained fearfully, a veritable cloudburst. I went into the museum for shelter. That museum is devoted mostly to the most celebrated son of Colmar, the painter Matthias Grünewald.

"There I saw his *Crucifixion*. M. Renouvier, it is the only crucifixion in the world. They have all tried the theme; all fail in its horror. It had only one true exponent, the man of my town, Grünewald. As I approached that awful canvas, its dramatic grandeur, its colour, obsessed me, me, the lad of the *bar mizvab*. I came to it. Suddenly the picture collapsed, I felt the weight of the wooden cross, not its shadow, but the cross itself fell upon me. The Christ fell on me, his pathetic body carried me down in its wake.

"I have never known what it was. Perhaps the sole manifestation of an epilepsy an uncle of mine was sickened with. Perhaps the sudden fever from damp, from exposure to rain. I fled, and as I fled I felt I was the Wandering Jew. His curse followed me.

"When I came into the happy circle of my family, gathered to taste raisin wines, marzipan, stuffed gooseneck, waiting to hear the well-coached boy, I could not reconcile the two experiences.

"I have dreaded the cross from then on, more than when I was

a child. I have since gone to the synagogue every day. There the friendly Lion of Judah protects me, there the Ark of the Law folds me into its scrolls, gives me my basis, the Torah, the books of Moses. I wait for our Messiah. He will not fall on me from a dark canvas shot with genius. No, he will come to me here, out of the sun of the Mediterranean, the sea that washes the Holy Land, our sea. There my ships ride; there my business is done."

M. Renouvier was not impressed, though the Adam's apple of old Lévy-Ruhlmann moved as in emotion. "Well, my good friend, you were not so paralysed that you could not ruin poor Stéphane Sabatier by a trick that does neither you nor your tribe much credit."

"Which brings me back to my marriage." Lévy-Ruhlmann ordered, "Do the children meet at Nice? Yes or no?"

"Yes," said Denys, "gladly, my colleague. You wouldn't object if I bring my François along despite his silly anti-Semitism? Perhaps, if your daughter . . ."

"Why not?" coldly answered the father of Adèle. "But I, like you, pay no dowry. I guarantee my daughter an inheritance at least as great as you guarantee Gisèle, say, ten millions. This is plain business, my friend, until our families are united when we become more than friends. I never mix things. However, I must see your son. I have a horror of *risbes*." He was showing off commercial indifference; in him pride of blood was close to a mania.

A fortnight later the mansion of the Lévy-Ruhlmanns at Nice was resplendent with the glare of six thousand watts, the basketed lights coming from six grand chandeliers. Four orchestras played in relays. The Jazz-Hot-Boys of Paris buzzed and slid and fattened the fox trots; the Orquesta Tipica Porteño, to reduced coloured lights, mesmerized the rich into the ooze of embraces of apache halls and slowly swung the cadence of rumba and tango into the flaccid muscles of lazy girls; the Prater Salon-Orchester pumped the orgasmal thirds of Viennese waltzes; and a balalaika orchestra produced large, windy versions of *Two Guitars* and the *Nebrani*. Everything was heard but the incantation of the synagogue, the reed pipes of Provence.

Rashi-Mordecai came in the uniform of a major in the French Army, spangled with earned medals held by striped ribbons. He was as intense as his father and had basically the same face, but a softer life had delicately turned the caricature into a tolerable presence. He was overcourteous and as polished as an actor of the Comédie

Française playing the role of Talleyrand. He was attentive to Gisèle, who, with intelligence, had set off her raven hair by a Miss Ba costume, the crinoline rage of Paris, its colour, purple. Her tiara was wide and the plausible rhinestones were studded with clearwater amethysts. She was gracious to the whole of the Ottolenghi family, the tribe of Mme Lévy-Ruhlmann, who had come, as was their custom, to inspect a possible addition to their very-much-there family. Their cohorts had come from Ancona, Mantua, Verona and Padua to see the gentile acquisition. They voted her pleasing.

Mme Lévy-Ruhlmann, recessive, cordial, also dark-faced and black-haired, resembled Gisèle greatly and so she approved. She sat with dignity behind her billowy skirts. The reception was an immense success, which was good, for never had they, rich as they were, spent a fraction of what they spent that night.

Rashi-Mordecai had been loaned by the French military attaché at Rome to the ballistics division of the Italian Army and had just been honoured for his work with the title of *cavaliere comandante*. The next step was nobility.

There was no reason for delaying the marriage. In the side salon, the parents, the betrothed and their lawyers drew up stipulations and accords. It was contingently agreed that should Adèle marry François she should never be able to borrow on the reversion of her inheritance. During the reception François, reconciled to the plutocratic fold, as his father predicted, danced constantly with Adèle and ended by usurping her card. Her tainted inheritance was weighed in one balance, the beard of Charles Maurras and the nose of Léon Daudet in the other, and Adèle o'ertipped the two henchmen of the king.

She was the perfect ingenue. She wanted to marry a fine young man, one who did not talk forever about bills of lading and discount rates. François Renouvrier, somewhat recovered from priggishness, cured also of the boyhood acne of Royalism, was on his way to being erected as a pillar of the Republic. He fancied the bloodless Adèle; she liked tough *coming men*. She worshipped Paris where they could live. He actually proposed and was instantly accepted. The otiose boy and the vapid young lady prepared for meaningless marriage.

The next day, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann motored his prospective relatives to Monte Carlo. He showed them the unrivalled Oceanographic Museum at Monaco, with its delicate forms of submarine life, almost too fantastic for belief. The most distorted nightmares

of modern painters, the crossed planes and curves of Klee, had no such refinement of line. Cécile found her resolution. The party adjourned for tea in a garden overlooking the flowered nose of Cap-Martin, and when they were ready to go home, the head waiter presented them with a blue envelope on a platter. It was addressed to M. Denys Renouvier, and read:

Dear Papa and Mamma,

Excuse this seemingly crazy action. I had to run away. I'm going to Spain, to Toledo, or Seville, something strange to me. I will write to you from there, so do not worry. I wish Gisèle happiness. Do not bother to look for me, this is a transient passion but one I must obey. I have enough money and clothes. If I am in ill-health or misfortune I will let you know. I love you very much.

Your ever-faithful but ever-wilful,  
Cécile

The family motored at once to their hotel but Mademoiselle had preceded them by an hour. They were plainly worried but Gisèle was not; she was resentful. "Shameful," she protested. "She was jealous at my marrying before her; she who tried to get ahead of me last year. Did I run away then? Imagine, she cannot stand being present at the ceremony. What jealousy! I never suspected it so deep."

"Piqued at Gisèle, well she'll be back soon." Denys appeared to be giving a decision but he was really deeply hurt in his bourgeois pride. She was a daughter to marry after all. "She'll be back in a fortnight for the wedding. Spain, hey? Borders between us. What romantic rubbish. Too crazy for words."

Denys by now flew into a passion, and Mother was too flustered to do anything but mutter, "She will bring me to an early grave." Then she took a series of sweetmeats, bon-bons, pastries, while gently weeping. "She's got all her crazy ideas from her father, what can I do?"

Cécile was bound for the leading marine station in the South of France, that at Banyuls-sur-Mer, about two miles from the Spanish frontier. The trip took twelve hours and she arrived exhausted. But the sight of Banyuls refreshed her by filling her with delight.

The mountains rise in a superb semicircle right from the sea

They are of the deepest vermilion and are terraced for nearly a thousand feet up with carefully tended vines of sweet grapes. Over the hills the mountaineers went on mules, belled, exactly as in Spain.

The pearl of the Roussillon, the fisherman's town below, consisted of one steep street sliding down to the shore. Several small lanes tried to interrupt its decline but failed. It was fantastic. The water there has a depth of blue that must be unique. The Blue Grotto at Capri may be even more thrilling, but it is a grotto and does not expose its miraculous blue to the perpetual sun glare. Here at Banyuls, the Mediterranean, blue elsewhere, surpasses itself not in shade but, one might say, in quality. There are all sorts of explanations advanced for its rich azure colour; some begin with the dust of the red hills, others insist on the presence of special aquatic weeds with an indigo quality. Whatever the truth, the ravishing beauty of the scene is too convincing, questions are stopped, the eye can only drink in, the brain falls asleep.

Cécile looked out across the bay. The hills turned towards a peninsula beyond which lay Spain. The plaza, or rather marine parade, was the perfect comic-opera port dear to stage-set painters. It was impossible that this scene, so faithfully copied from gaudy theatre curtains, could be real. The chromatically rich houses had each a tiny restaurant or bar. Each had awnings gayer than the next, camouflage for Noah's Ark zebras. The hotels were unprosperous, hidden behind gardens fat with tropical foliage, rank with weeds, cluttered with large showy flowers, many odourless. The palm family was marshalled for review.

Out into the sea there projected a long stone jetty, beyond which on a miniature rock island was her destination, the Arago museum. It was devoted to oceanography and ichthyology but, as it was not founded on roulette, it could not compete with the superb collection of the Prince of Monaco. It was the working laboratory of the University of Paris. It was much smaller than she had thought, but looked serious. She walked down the strand, gay, dancing, singing snatches, a potpourri of clipped themes. The shore road was lined with orange trees. It was the boast of this village that if the orange tree flourished at Nice or Menton it matured only at Banyuls. Here was a town of a thousand or so yet its wines and *apéritifs* were demanded all over France. It was the French rival of Oporto for sweet wines, with which it competed for price rather than taste. It rivalled Jaffa for thick-skinned oranges, but again

rather on price. Fishermen were everywhere drying nets along the pebbled shore. Wine, oranges, fish, tourists, the museum; from this fivefold contribution the indigenous population extracted a quiet poverty.

Cécile was directed to a pension next to the jetty. It was kept by the demonstrator at the laboratory, a painstaking Parisian instructor, Dr. Gaston Despard. Tubercular, in fact an advanced case, he had been sent down there to work in biology. Cellular organization was his specialty and for its study, especially, he made use of an elaborate mathematical equipment that he fondly hoped would make the protozoa and radiolaria as lucid as their arithmetical expression. His mother kept the pension so that between them they could make a living.

The first night, Cécile, gay with her adventure, talked to M. Despard and showed her certificates of proficiency. She was willing to work for nothing, she told him, for what she wanted was training and experience. She had the funds, she could concentrate on her work.

"Mademoiselle," he said, amused, "we cannot afford to pay for any help so that our indifferent budget makes it sure that our staff has to do hours of painstaking clerical work to the detriment of science. But we cannot afford to use anyone incompetent even for nothing, since carelessness and error will cost us more time still." Cécile was chagrined, but she was finally permitted to do clerical jobs . . . for nothing. Her buoyancy was reduced by her first experience with workaday demands, the first time that praise was not given her merely because she was born rich and attractive. There was much to learn. She was surprised at how little she, who had won honours in the *lycée*, knew about natural history. She was also taken aback at the complex mathematical equipment demanded. It looked to her at first as though the accountancy of science had buried its romance fathoms deep in the aquatic basin. But she was determined and she came through. Not in science but in seriousness, in discipline, in purpose.

At night she sat in the drab fly-specked pension of Madame Despard. The poor lady could prepare delicious ragouts but, outside the stew family, her cooking was as flat as the income of her boarders. They were all laboratory workers. They were not blind to the intense beauty of Banyuls, but they were poor men and the only pleasure they could afford was to hike in the hills. Of fishing



they had a surfeit. They regarded Cécile with a distant air. It surprised her, for male admiration was her right. But every Saturday night they slunk off and took a bus to Collioure, a town some five miles away. Cécile did not know why. Neither did Mamma Despard, at least so she said. Professor Despard, between his hacking cough and elaborate calculations, told her it was for a "good time." She assumed it was the cinema.

Cécile kept a detailed journal. At nightfall, for months, she sat in the flower-choked garden, and, with the bees buzzing in her small ears, looked over the magical prospect with steady joy. The town was so closely embraced by sea and mountain it seemed it must choose soon between its two exigent lovers or be squeezed to death. In this garden she wrote:

"My sister sleeps in a briar bush with a prickly pear, fallen from a scorched tree. My lover wanders far away. The errant boy must be adding and adding the most varied girls, for in no other way can he understand life. Should I wait for him? Shall I despise him? Shall I seek a man? Shall I work? Or shall I wander among fish and sea anemones, count specimens, and become Madame Eyeglasses, the toothless and sexless priestess of learning? Oh, Cécile Renouvier, you are still a rich girl who can pick and choose and fool with life. You have a laugh like a coin's ring. You can never have a soul for you can buy everything that makes the soul, weary ambition, deferred hope, the incentives to escape misery. If you learn to work, Banyuls is worth while."

*Witches*

STÉPHANE SABATIER, without capital, was like any other shabby, decent, unemployed workman. He had none of the bravado, the derring-do, the sense of theatrical villainy, the loquacity of his Marseille career. Unlike other workers, he dreamed of a come-back, but his dreams were wrapped in grey goods. He was a tourist whose sight-seeing was employment agencies. He "saw the world" before factory gates; he was a traveller of back streets; a gourmet of differences in the plainest foods, a duller and subtler art than that of the Hundred Fine Palates at Paris.

That night the former wine-grower speculated on which road he would take. He decided to go into the Cévennes, perhaps up to the horse and cattle market of Villefort. In that natural amphitheatre of the mountains, the horse and mule market was now animated; he had read that they found it hard to obtain labour in the remote lands.

He went north to Alès, his clothing tied in a bundle on a stick, in the fashion of vagabonds.

Two days of wandering, living on bread and wine begged from workmen on the roads, landed him in the capital of the mountain lands. He passed a few gaily painted buses carrying tourists to the Pont du Gard, then the country fell silent, and at last there came up before him the eerie city of Saint-Jean-du-Gard.

It was a town he had heard of from his father. The population are, for the most part, descendants of the Camisards, of the Protestants who fought off the troops of the French kings for thirty years or more. They produced more legendary heroes than any part of France. So much resistance, so much heroism, such consequent massacres and executions had drained the people. The town was a mass of eccentrics, cretins, actual lunatics, religious dervishes. In fact, it might be doubted whether a majority of the inhabitants were technically sane. Those who were sane were fanatics. They pub-

lished Sunday-school manuals, Protestant awakeners, and held prayer meetings in the American revival style.

It was thronged on holidays with creaky buses come from the cities of lower Languedoc, whose passengers delighted to see the unusual place. They went through its mountain streets, the water running down in neglected spouts, the smell of damp mould coming from every broken-down door in front of cellars.

As night came down, the town became the natural home of Doctor Caligari's client, César. The tourists, frightened, left quickly. At night the streets of Saint-Jean-du-Gard seemed to hold hags, wizards, bags of bones, whistling winds. Dark clouds passed over the unlighted streets. The gloomy mountains overshadowed the ends of those streets if the moonlight dared appear. The wind whistled through the broken houses, came up from the open cellars; the stink of years-dead wet hay filled the place. Here Christianity and the delights of madmen found a common stronghold.

It was too late for Stéphane Sabatier to find the road to Villefort. He found his way instead to the pastor's home, the same name as his own, Sabatier. It was the Smith or Brown of the French Protestants.

The pastor, when he heard that this was the son of Sabatier of Pézenas, one of the glories of the pulpit, was profuse in invitation. He was eloquent but poor. If ever a man dispensed Christian charity it was the pastor of Saint-Jean-du-Gard. "Share my home, share it till you are established; we may find a place for you here, for there is no unemployment. Do not be surprised at what I say. All the young people have left this town; it is a city of the aged. A few strong Italians, mountain Piedmontese, come here and do the hard work. They are paid mostly in round bread, for we have few rich men about here. Oh yes, we have the local nobility near by, but they detest the Evangelicals. The country here is very aristocratic you know," he said with some pride although he spoke of enemies, "but Montcalms, Suffrens, De Toquevilles, these are great names in history, yes, but they, grand families, have little truck with the neglected folk up here. And how is it in the big cities? I hear, my friend, that France does badly. When will she listen to the word of Jesus Christ and forsake Rome and atheism? Then she will be mighty like England that has held to His blessed word, to the Book. He has exalted that poor island and left our rich state to endless miseries, revolutions, convulsions, disorders. His hand is heavy on the French.

And to think that with the gospel we might speak like the English ballad writer, Mac something:

*And may there be the sound of music and of dance  
Through thy cornfields green and sunny vines, O pleasant land of  
France."*

He stopped for emotion. A true Frenchman, thought Stéphane. The words of God do not interfere with good wine, but by music he must mean psalms, English psalms and German, such as Mother delights in. By dances he means rural dances after the harvest. He spoke aloud, "Yes, *M. le Pasteur*, the people in France is not yet awake. But I do not concern myself with politics, for I shall not think straight until I work straight. Can I stay here? For I would rather not take the long walk to Villefort?"

"I hope it can be arranged, if not, I suggest you work in the glove factories at Millau. It is easy to follow the gorges of the Tarn, and a great experience withal. At the end of it, at Millau, we have co-religionists who employ only our own. The glove factories are doing well, for they say this Roosevelt is restoring prosperity in America, and their ladies prefer our soft gloves."

Stéphane had to pay the price of hospitality, to accompany the pastor to the prayer meeting. He knew the services very well. The organist, playing devoutly and with true musicianship, began with the transposed chorales of Schütz, the music of the German Church of the seventeenth century, slow, grave, believing; then, suddenly, with no sense of its violent contrast, there followed Sullivan's *Onward Christian Soldiers*:

*En avant, soldats chrétiens, en avant à la guerre  
Avec la croix de Jésus, marchant au paravant.*

The organist asked for themes for improvisations. A nurse, in the uniform of a Protestant sister, closed her eyes and demurely asked for the Forty-Seventh Psalm. An old, creaky gentleman, with a Silas or Reuben beard and shaven upper lip, asked for an improvisation on the theme of the martyrs of the Faith.

There they were, listed on the wall, those that had been burned by the hundreds on the public places of Languedoc, those hanged, garrotted, the pastors hunted and shot down in their mountain refuges.

The Bible lay open all the time on a large table; it faced the congregation. It was an immense Bible; above it was a simple wooden cross. The pastor spoke to this lost people, on the need of a true revolution, a revolution in which rich men gave their all to God. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." Here, amid the poorest mountaineers, the Gospel, at last, was recognizable.

The pastor accompanied Stéphane to the hotel. He lodged him there as his own home (he later considered) was "too primitive." Actually the hotel was more than primitive, it was the most bizarre home possible. Unlighted save by portable kerosene lamps, it was partitioned off from an abandoned mill by no partitions, so to speak. The hotel consisted of twelve rooms. These were arranged where the grain had once been stored. The halls of the hotel ended suddenly, then came the void, the vast yawning space at the bottom of which were millstones. The water still moved the mill wheel, whose creaking served as the treble sound to the accompaniment of the noises of the flume. A staccato noise of bats was added to the weird music. The proprietor, tax collector of the district, was altogether too quiet. He accompanied Stéphane to his room with the ease of a slippered murderer.

"Be careful not to step out into the mill," he warned. "We once lost a promising young man, an artist, that way. It has been our only casualty."

The room was as amazing as the hotel. The walls were made of the wooden grain bins; the bed was a crib box for fodder. The mattress, placed in the box, was, surprisingly enough, excellent. At least, thought Stéphane, I will be like the mad kings or queens of Spain and spend my time rehearsing for my coffin. Between the macabre town, the prayer meeting wrapt in the infinite, the yawning abyss of the mill, and the casketlike crib box, I am tempting the unseen powers to take their apprentice and teach him the infernal arts.

He slept well, after wholesome food and rough wine. Tired, he had the first night's sleep that was not enveloped in a dull grey mist, the first sleep in which he did not feel that his mouth was tasteless. The crib box had a stuffing, so downy, so ethereal, that the body floated, the legs went upwards and led to flight dreams.

Suddenly he went through the common dream that one is hurled into space. The dreamer usually ends the phantasmagoria by not resolving the arc; it passes out in confusion. But not this night

with Stéphane. He was in the room next to the open space; his body landed in the millstones; it was ground to fine powder; revived in invisible black; covered with a satanic smoke cloak, equally invisible and weightless; it was transported to the top of the black hill over Saint-Jean-du-Gard.

The tom-tom beat incessantly; it beat with the racket of the mill wheel; and the hillsides filled at its command. The four hills were filled with a demoniac congress. On the east, the animated bones of horses (neighs and whinnies came out which had the hollow quality of their bones), out of which the marrow was oozing. The west hillside was covered with crones, witches, hags and vixens, all equipped with clappers which they turned about as at a New Year's party. The crones muttered; the vixens shrieked; the witches built up a sonata of curses in three movements; and the hags bellowed. The cacophony was resolved by their chief, Melchior Aboudaram, governor of the underworld. The northern hill was brilliantly lighted, covered with rose trees, fig trees and innumerable evergreens. Above it wandered the pensive Othello looking down sorrowfully upon Cyprus. He was silent and carried a lady's handkerchief tied to his codpiece, and he wore a blue band with the word, "Miséricorde." The southern hill was of the round shape of the Cimmerian Sea; it generated high inky waterspouts; above it a rain of blood came down incessantly and foundered into the black waves.

Stéphane celebrated the witches' sabbath. He followed the gestures of the celebrants but, of course, did everything in reverse. Where they swung the censer from right to left, where they rang bells before prayer, where they intoned praises at the end of prayers, he went from left to right, rang bells afterwards, sang curses at the beginning of each rite. His voice croaked, his Adam's apple grew like that of Lévy-Ruhlmann, but the resemblance of his satanic associate was nearer the face of the prophetic Pressensé.

The cataract of noises, the wails, howls and winds that emerged from horses, women, and the roar of the black sea, the increasing whirl of the incantations, the ever-widening circles about the sick sorcerers' moon, brought him flying quietly to the garden of Cyprus where he looked out steadfastly with the sad, dumb Othello. He looked into more and more light and quietly woke up.

He came out of it easily. He laughed. The horrors sloughed off without trouble. His night had been a cross between profound rest and the images of Marseille, excited by the three

sensations: the queer town, the prayer meeting, and the craziest hotel conceivable.

In the morning, breakfast was served in the bar, black coffee overlorded by chicory, musty, hard *croissants*, and the conversation of three gentlemen, the carpet-slipped landlord, the postmaster and letter-carrier, half blind and with thirty-two rotten-looking teeth (one could only see twelve, but they were a hundred per cent sample), and a balmy count, relative of some celebrated writer. The last was the perfect crackpot aristo. He wore a broken straw hat, a nankeen coat, winter and summer, and, in that settlement, a chipped monocle, "to distinguish myself from Monsieur Bourgeois," he explained. He was a patron of arts, had the only gramophone in Saint-Jean-du-Gard. Many of his records were thirty years old, fourteen inches wide, Pathés, Fonotipias. They contained the serenade of Victor Maurel from *Don Giovanni*, of Francesco d'Andrade of Lisbon in his inimitable, breath-taking version of the champagne song, old disks of Lucien Muratore in *I Lombardi*—in fact it was a connoisseur's choice among the stars of 1900. He hummed Mozart's celebrated *Das Veilchen*, but in Italian: "*Nel praticello timida*," he began, but his voice was as cracked as his straw hat.

The aristo was the head and front of the fanatical Catholic minority in the town. Out of a consistent whim he backed the pretensions of the hotel of the converted mill, though, and this rendered him suspect to the choleric curé, M. Rabbaissaire. It was necessary for Catholics to gather in the Hôtel des Cévennes. So the town divided. The Ramillé family, Protestants, ran the hotel in which Stéphane was lodged, the Despiau family ran the Roman shop. They had far the finer hotel; that is, the guests were required to use a pestiferous privy instead of an open hole, surrounded by crazy paving over the mill stream. On the other hand the hotel of the mill developed the minds of its guests. For its eight permanent residents were the intellectual cream in that city where emigration had reduced the mind to skimmed milk. They were:

HENRI ROBERT-MICHEL

SUZANNE DESPRADES

GEORGES TESSAN

DAVID MONCEY

GABRIELLE LARRIVIÈRE

Engineer of the Bridge Service of the State

Teacher of the children, agnostic, radical

Teacher of older children, socialist

Chemist, expert of the tannery works, diplomaed

Piano teacher, organist of the Protestant Church

DANTON URUGNE	Choral expert, writer of operatic fantasies, by profession master mason
RENÉ-ÉMILE GARROD	Expert in agriculture, honours, Chevalier of Agricultural Merit, expert in apiculture too
GUILLAUME BLIN	Tax expert, associated with stamp collections of the excise

The enemy camp at the Hôtel des Cévennes were tougher. They were six only:

ANDRÉ-JULES BRETON	Police chief, three daughters, all nuns
STÉPHANE PROULX	<i>Rentier</i> , writer of Catholic historians' manuals, contributor, <i>Revue des questions historiques</i>
GEORGES DUPONT	Owner largest store, only man employing more than ten persons, waiting for new house
HYACINTHE ROBINNET	Builder, master mason, enemy of Urugne
MICHAËL SCHAUTZ	Alsatian, representative of the Bank when open on market days
LUIGI CENTORELLI	<i>Padrone</i> , hirer of mountain families for work in the lowland vineyards

The town was divided on every issue. From assessments to improvements, from religion to politics; the Ramillé faction and the Despiau faction hated each other, made no sign of common courtesy when they met. It may seem surprising that men rallied to the hotel owners who charged as much as the traffic could bear, but the history of our species teaches us that tenants in Berlin shoot at lads that pay rent in London until death gives them both their dispossession.

The highlands about Saint-Jean-du-Gard produced a scratch crop of curious grey wine whose flavour was sought by a limited circle of epicures at Paris. Pastor Sabatier got Stéphane work in those fields where he was soon at home. Between the labours of the vine, the crib box at night, together with the confabulations of the Ramillé faction at dinner, he spent an occupied day and a deeply restful night.

The images that peopled his first night's dream came back in infinitely varied shapes, disguises and symbols, but in some manner they became the fixtures of his sleep. Stéphane rarely dreamed at Marseille. Here the town was a matrix of fanciful thought. He heard every tone as a theme on which to embroider cadenzas. He looked about him. It was the nearest thing to the woodcuts of



*Paradise Lost* and the *Inferno* that he had pored over and been frightened by as a child. He remembered that it was he, not Onésime, who had been first in design, and that he had won the department prize for a good crayon impression of Molière's theatre at Pézenas.

But no, he thought, Onésime is an artist and I am a business failure. He laughed at Stéphane Sabatier, self-styled scoundrel and hardfisted crook, as an artist. But then he remembered Stéphane the field worker. He began painting, crudely at first, later, rather deftly. The country and its inhabitants forced him to paint. The schoolboy love of art and the impossibility of doing anything at all in that strange place conjoined, and so he practised hard. But he still saw it as comic, feeling that a former rich man should be an artist, and so he worked in most distant fields and left his easel at the pastor's. As the summer advanced he painted three or four hours a day.

As it happened, Georges Tesson, teacher of superior classes, looked over his shoulder as he was absorbed in painting. He tapped Stéphane. "Unless I am blind, my friend, you have an extraordinary natural talent. You think with the dark hard-hitting mind of Rouault. You have something of his drama, bitterness, massive quality. Your control is not so good. Here, here, your brush is too polite, you are not full of hatred such as every great enemy of the Philistines must be."

"I am glad you think so well of my work," Stéphane said gratefully. "Something moved me in this banshee town. It is a land of living idiots and dead souls, of ragged ghosts, of unforgiving pastors. It has a Capulet and Montague following of two landlords. It is full of the decrepit, of imbecile children, and of goitre. Common sense is outlawed here; we are far from rationality of cities."

"Are you sure of all that?" said Tesson. "I left Paris because I saw it as madder than this comparatively balanced population. I prefer overt madness. Here the disorder of the mind is seen against the backdrop of nature's order. In Paris a million lives are ruined by the cult of success."

Stéphane tried to interrupt but the course down the rapids was too swift. "But peasants are covetous and unadventurous too," he got in, but Tesson had to sum up.

"In this town you see straightforwardly, breathe a pure air, work in the fields under the sun, sleep in the odour of hay. The dark figures you conjure out of the colour of this city, these are

*artistic.*" He stamped his foot. "The darkness of Goya sped out of the sun; the masks of James Ensor, hideous, anatomical, illumined the mists of Antwerp. These are sunny compared to the false light of your triumphant academicians, your foolish faces of nudes by the preened brush of a Chabas. No, I am for the sanity of great art. Follow it. You have genius, M. Sabatier, I sense it."

It took Stéphane a few weeks to believe in his new star. At first he hitched a three-wheel wagon to it. Even so it rode well. He slowly became more confident. He noticed that he no longer dashed to the Paris newspapers to read the financial columns and reckon the imaginary games with which the penniless man might stage a come-back. Money receded until it was nearly out of sight.

One evening he was asked by Tessan to come to the school. So were all the inhabitants of the Ramillé hotel. When he got there he saw his pictures exhibited, having been carefully matted by Mlle Desprades in the children's school. They had stolen them and put them up for exhibition, for as Tessan observed, "Confidence grows out of public appreciation, despair out of solitary self-criticism. Public criticism gives an artist the necessary fighting mood to go on." He was afraid Stéphane would go back into business and did what he could to confirm him in his new activities.

The Ramillé crowd, out of clan loyalty, grew ecstatic and exhausted every synonym of praise. The Despiau crowd sneered at his "humped trees," his "daubed colour," "uncertainty." Their leader, the curé, said cheerfully, "Imagine art coming from an arid *papayot!*\* We decorate the Sistine Chapel with Michelangelo, and they sell their Rembrandts to merchants. Savages. They paint?" The Despiau crowd laughed with country-gentry foulness.

Tessan was right. Stéphane now wished to excel so as to humble his critics. The pride that made him step out and get ahead of Onésime and ruin De Pressensé, took a bow on its third stage. He wished to compare notes with Onésime. He wrote Mother at Montauban, had she heard from him? A heartbroken reply, "One son as good as dead, the other a common field labourer. I am cursed." Stéphane felt now that the missing brother was the favourite. A

\* Pejorative slang for a Protestant.

tigress fights fiercest for a lame cub. He advertised for Onésime in *Le Petit Meridional* and received a strange reply:

Monsieur S. Sabatier,

I have spurned your vagrant, indecisive, spineless, futile brother. But that is no reason why a brother, who for some mad reason wishes to trace this nonentity, should be worried. His last address was Poste Restante, Arles.

Respectfully,

Simone Lamouroux

*Stéphane Grows to Full Stature*

STÉPHANE'S letters to Onésime remained unanswered and were returned in a batch "uncalled for, left no forwarding address." When Stéphane appealed to Simone Lamouroux for further help she scribbled on the envelope, "I have done more than I should have. S.L." Stéphane, who had not troubled a bit about Onésime's absence for a year, when he was in business, was surprised at his aroused concern. He wrote imploringly to the prefects of the three neighbouring departments. No news. Well, he thought, he must have gone to Paris like every wanderer. But he itched to compare notes. There was no other person painting seriously at Saint-Jean-du-Gard. He wanted to leave for some spot where there were congenial spirits.

For life there had its drawbacks. In order to requite Pastor Sabatier for his continuous benevolence, Stéphane had to attend church faithfully. He dared not break the old fellow's heart and tell him that the son of the orator of Pézenas did not believe. The Protestants of France, a small sect, do not countenance the idea of deserters. M. Doumergue of Tournefeuille, in that very department, was now the President of France. He was a loyal churchgoer and gave lustre to their community. It was no time to leave, for the prestige of Doumergue at last increased the attendance at Pastor Sabatier's congregation. This, although privately he thought the old gasbag a vicious timeserver, and no credit to Christ's church.

The second drawback was the division of the town into two absurd factions. He had to support the Ramillé clan in every conflict. The division of the town was not capricious. It was really an economic warfare and no one was allowed to inhabit the stratosphere above the battle planes. Stéphane, by now completely absorbed in his vocation, disliked going to the bitter town meetings to argue and vote for his side. He was made head of the volunteer fire company and singlehanded extinguished a large barn fire. Merely another trophy for the Ramillés.

Stéphane saved every franc possible for paints, easel, brushes,

canvas, Winsor & Newton, Rembrandt colours, bogus paper, crayons, and the other expensive materials of artists. They came from Paris and on those gala days he was everybody's friend, even of the opposition. His first picture, a dark, widespread oak tree in a troubled, wind-swept sky, was sent down to Nîmes and got honourable mention. His next picture was of a different calibre.

Georges Tessan and Suzanne Desprades, the teachers, were to be married. It was a secular wedding, pugnaciously rationalist. Stéphane was best man but his roving glance fixed, with nervous precision, the mass of assembled heads, clothes, hands and positions. It was to be a picture as complete socially as Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans*. There were forty guests. Their gallery of noses, long, Gascon, squashed, snub, their eyes from saucers to slits, their mouths from the compressed miserly and the dribbling senile laugh to the girl's Cupid's bow, were so generated by each spectator's posture that everyone's body, features and carriage were logical, atomic, truly made a composition. They presented too, in some not easily definable manner, their economic position, or rather the social expression of their money. Money sat strangely in each face, in some as arrogance, in others as disdain, in still others as amused cold indifference. Poverty drew on its enormous wardrobe of grimaces from mendicancy, cadging, management to open rebellion.

The third triumph of Stéphane was in the harmony with which each individual was made logical for himself and for his class, and yet the two aspects were fully recognizable only by the way in which he participated in that mass of spectators. The grouping was a person by itself. The composition was harmonious but it was a harmony brought about by criticism rather than by arrangement. It was the grouping of the guests as an accident in their whole lives,

It took Stéphane six months to complete the picture. His rejected sketches, his long travail on the inner logic of the group, his casting out, almost hysterically, any rendition that was not the servant of the three synoptic viewpoints, all wearied him. He had never persisted so hard at anything. Colour was still his weak point. His lack of academic training did him a sorry turn there. But, in compensation, business experience assisted him in the psychological and economic fusion of the faces. A "mere" artist could not have known so much. A politician like Courbet could.

At twenty-seven, the amateur aspects of Stéphane's life were over. No man can do a job like that and go back to frittering

away his time in the anonymous pursuit of money. The demon had seized him; he was an artist. He freed himself, in this healthy way, of the lingering mixture of respect and contempt of an older practical brother for a younger Bohemian one. The blackmail of the weak was over.

The crowd at the Ramillé hotel may have been moved by partisan enthusiasm, but the old aristo was not. His monocled gaze detected in Stéphane an enemy of his order. "I still own some business properties in Philadelphia in the U.S.A.," he told Stéphane. "And there I used also to own a whole row of dwellings in Camac Street, a sort of Philadelphia Montparnasse. Well, there I learned that the Bohemian artist, the stark roaring individualist, was a most reliable fellow. He began and ended his revolt in a cup of coffee and in sleeping with an unmarried model. But the practical, sane, cold artists, they saw fiercely. You, Monsieur, you are touched by their method. I have never needed information to tell me who painted dangerously. You can go through the crowded vademecums like *Apollo*, but the vital salts of art are sprinkled elsewhere. They are then rubbed into the wounds of society. M. Sabatier, you are on the path of destruction, you will follow the clumped, black-suffused images in Goya's phantasmagorias. You will be like him, an exile at the end, an exile from the proper ends of man. There is a case for the gentleman, even a fusty old gentleman like myself. I do nothing, but I am myself."

In this way all the habitués of the Ramillé hotel gave their impressions and advice. Soon they knew Stéphane's story, the former brilliant importer and shipper of Marseille now a field labourer and amateur painter in that sick town of Saint-Jean-du-Gard. Some thought him impossible, even though he existed. There was a marked restraint in the hum of scandal and commentary when he appeared.

As the canvases multiplied, the need for a deeper understanding of faces, landscapes, forms, became paramount. The visual aspects were as multiple as the souls of men. The eye worked not by the pupil so much as by the brain behind it; the brain itself was some unaccountable medley of make-up and circumstance. In the dark hills, a young man asks questions of himself; Stéphane became a puppet show of question and response, all carried out in the internal petty theatre between the ears. The Punch of genius beat the gendarme of doubt. He painted steadily, but still felt that, without

a human experience beyond his Marseille drama, he would never have enough basis for telling work.

He spoke to the Despiau crowd, despite the interdictions of the walled factions. What had made the police chief, Breton, hard-faced peasant, give three daughters to the nunneries? Why did Proulx, the *rentier*, wear out his rheumatic fingers writing in defence of Mary Stuart and Lucretia Borgia? What made Robinnet, the loutish mason, hate his competitor Urugne, a man of the most refined perceptions? How did he justify himself before nature?

An artist, groaned Stéphane, that is an eye, and the eye, for us, is the universe. All that we know is by our absorption of light. An artist, therefore, is impudent. True, he leaves out words and music, flowers, wines and soft velvets. Deprived of four senses, he must comprehend all five with one. He must show deafness by its effect on the expression, estimate the gourmet by the light in his eyes. I can only see men if, once I know the cause of their blemishes, I hate those blemishes without excuse. Stéphane Sabatier, if your intelligence grew larger than your body, you would overshadow your past as Galileo's mind overshadows the stupendous statues of Rameses.





BOOK THREE  
OF LOVE, BOTH CONSTANT  
AND WILFUL



*A Night at Port-Vendres*

CÉCILE soon found out why the young scientists left their cold fish plates on Saturday nights to go up to Collioure. On the table of the pension at Banyuls she found a copy of Jacques Roberti's celebrated pornographic study, *La Belle de Nuit*. It described the white-slave traffic of France, without sensationalism, from the Pans de Goron, the winding cathedral steps at Le Mans, down to the artists' and sailors' houses of prostitution in the all too picturesque Collioure, exquisitely strange town of the Vermilion Coast. Its descriptions of the house at Collioure were its endpiece and masterpiece.

Deeply as the men at the laboratory loved marine research, they sneaked on Saturday nights to near-by Collioure, circled around the fortification so as not to be seen in the main square, and then disappeared into the Flower Basket, the Myosotis, Garden of Lucille, At Ines's, or the Green Parrot. These were strewn all the way from Port-Vendres to Collioure. The soldiery were reserved to the Eden, the officers to the Star, and the Arab shipworkers and A.B. seamen to the Ouled Nails at the low street of Port-Vendres, under the bar, marked, in Arabic: Holy City of Kairouan.

Into these bars gathered the motley population of the Pyrénées-Orientales: mountaineers, wine-growers, workers in the immense bottling plants of Byrrh, one of France's cheapest and most diffused *apéritifs*, packers at the Saint-Christau spring whose waters are considered sovereign for mouth ailments, labourers at Perpignan and Argeles, Catalans, gipsies, Andorran smugglers, white-slave traffickers for the oilworkers' houses of ill fame at Oran, above all, artists from Paris, Bohemians, cabaret poets, and here and there a tourist attracted to Collioure as the most fascinating spot in France. British travellers passed by on the way to Algiers, going to the St. George Heights, now fast becoming another Bournemouth. The scientists from the Arago Station at Banyuls were the only really modest folk who gathered in this Bowery of the Mediterranean.

Cécile still had something of the devil in her. She took the bus from Banyuls to Collioure, informing the scandalized Mme Despard that she would be back in the small hours. The bus rounded the turn near the stupendous home for rachitic children, passed the roseate bush-stuffed wine hills, and came down into the dusty streets of Port-Vendres, as a few Spanish conspirators tried to attract the lady by tickling her cheeks with their gross mustachios.

At Port-Vendres, Cécile stopped. She walked by a large restaurant, from which she heard the clatter that filled pandemonium at the infernal congress. She looked in. There was a table in the H shape, with about a hundred strange-looking men and women. They were a bouquet of red faces, squinty eyes, purple cheeks, dishonest mouths. There were peaked chins and powerful jowls, noses that smelled all the time and noses that had been powerfully bashed in. It was a most astounding collection of hobohemian faces. A Gavarni could not have hoped for more.

Cécile was determined to explore this amazing dinner, this large banquet in a town of three thousand. She entered, paid fifty francs (wine included) to a cauliflower-eared cashier, and was set down next to some overfat ladies whose sweat overcame their deodorants, the rank flowers and the pungent food. They were, as she soon found out, owners of brothels. This was the annual convention of the owners of legalized houses of prostitution in France, an honourable commerce, authorized by the state, ignored by the Church, defended by medicine, hated by the feminist leagues.

The object of the celebration was the victory gained over the ministry of public health by the installation of new houses at Thuir and Ax-les-Thermes. This privilege had been fought for years by the archbishop and the chiefs of police. Their resistance was overcome in one case, by definite persuadings, and now all was well. Cécile was assumed to be in this business; when asked where, she was quick enough to say, "At Brussels, Monsieur." This was outside their roll call. She was welcomed as a fraternal delegate from Belgium.

The first speaker was the editor of the local newspaper. He cleared his throat, for he was just a bit embarrassed. "My good friends," he began, "a society lives by its trades, and I need not tell you either how ancient yours is nor how honourably regarded. Bulwark of the family, guardian of the young girl by draining away the base appetites of young men, it has ever been esteemed among

the peoples of hot blood. The walls of Pompeii, the baths of Ostia, the beauteous homes of beauteous women in the Isle of Melos, testify to its importance in the ancient world. No disease shadowed its loveliness.

"Then came centuries of asceticism. Only in Constantinople, where civilization endured when all else was dark, did the sacred art flourish. The warriors of Byzantium, under Theophano, assailed the Crimea. Their lithe bodies, satisfied in the bordellos of their Golden Horn, gave them the strength to overcome the gross Scythian hordes. Not until they met a race steeped in this same practice, the Arabs and Turks, sons of seraglio and house of pleasure, did they falter.

"As the refinements of the Renaissance replaced the crudities of the Dark Ages, the popes, ever sensitive, infallible on morals when speaking *ex cathedra*, gave to the Jews of Rome the licence to maintain these houses and demanded but a modest reward for their gracious permission. My friends, I toast The Lilies at Thuir, Realm of Dreams at our delicious resort, Ax-les-Thermes."

Thunderous applause from the whole confraternity greeted the discourse. The hard palms of procurer, cadet, mackerel, madam and detectives of the morals squad approved this extravagant toast.

The next speaker was the county doctor. He observed, "The last speaker did not dwell on the service of our friends here to hygiene, to the safety of life. To those who read with horror of the bestial rapes in remote country districts by maddened farm boys, it must be patent how much you do to keep life pleasant for good women. If these farm boys only had a house near by, such as you own, how helpful it would be! I go further than the last speaker; I say, that just because disease has shadowed love since the sixteenth century, it is only by regulated houses, such as you have, that the race can be kept from poisoning. Therefore I toast the regulated houses of France." He lifted his corrupt glass high when suddenly he was cut across the forehead by a glass of champagne. It had been hurled by Cécile. She had come for fun but ended in a rage. Ardent feminist, this degradation was too much.

The banquet party turned to look at the infuriated honest girl. They sent two strong boys to her side, they pinned her arms, hustled her out, and threw her into the street. They would do nothing more to stop her. Publicity was not their long suit. The doctor

plaint. The doorkeeper, Théophile, got a swift kick in the pants for admitting an unknown person and that was all.

Cécile was no longer anxious to see the comic side of the visit of the young scientists at Collioure. It was ten at night and she was sick of the sordid travesty on love that one saw everywhere. She waited for the eleven o'clock bus for the Spanish frontier, the last.

In the distance she saw a public meeting, draped with red flags and pictures of Jaurès and Liebknecht. Jaurès of Perpignan, the local tribune, was the idol of the Left in the Pyrénées-Orientales, as Marshal Joffre of Rivesaltes, in the same department, was the local hero of the Right. Cécile had an hour to wait. She listened to the speakers merely to while away time. Her wealth and the laughing attitude of her family towards all serious thought had precluded her paying the slightest attention hitherto to socialist thinking.

The orator was a man of forty-five, with a dead voice, husky, ungracious in gesture, nervous of speech, hurried. In person he was stocky, bald, unattractive. He had nothing but his ideas with which to carry conviction; if they could survive that man's handicaps, they must be significant.

"Workers of Port-Vendres, the most disgraceful event in years has been allowed to take place here to-night. The gangsters who exploit the tired flesh of poor women, purveyors for the loveless lives of miserable, because poor, young men, the caterers to the debased appetites of corrupt well-to-do amateurs have dared to hold a banquet to celebrate the opening, by permission of the Republic, of two houses of ill fame in this department. I do not speak of abstract morality, that means nothing to me. I speak from the viewpoint of the working class, parents of these daughters. Oh, Republic that issued from the days of 1789, is this what you cover with your Phrygian bonnet? Not a Republic where the young men and women study, play, create literature, science, art, music and healthy, happy children, but a Republic where love is bought and sold! This is the *fraternité* of the Third Republic! They have the right to flout this traffic in our faces; yet woe unto us if we dare hold a meeting for striking dock workers here.

"This fantastic personage, called the prefect of the Pyrénées-Orientales, has presumed upon us too much with his cynicism. Are there any of us here that propose to tolerate this? I beg you to note that in Perpignan the gipsies sleep in the fields, not because

they love to be nomads but because they cannot pay rent, that the migratory workers live in cabins, shacks, shanties, barracks, what you will, but that there is capital enough to equip luxurious houses of prostitution. There is no money for the decent housing of the daughters of the poor but there is plenty of money to house them after they are in degradation. The houses they rent us are without decoration, mere plaster walls, but for these infamies they find Prix de Rome artists, their walls are decorated as in Capua. To-morrow before the prefecture at Perpignan! This scandal must cease."

The mixed audience was sympathetic, but to-morrow was Sunday. They could do other things than make a costly trip to Perpignan to assail the silly prefect. Cécile watched the wide-mouthed crowd, reasonably intelligent but unenergetic. She wanted to get up and shriek, to lead the procession. Every woman in France, it has been said, has the exalted fervour of Théroigne de Méricourt; they snort naturally on the barricades. Just as she was about to indulge in theatricals, the dry-voiced speaker resumed.

"I see there is no response. We shall continue to educate you systematically, to arouse you to the need of vindicating your liberties and honour as workmen, incident by incident, instead of waiting lazily for the great day, for the drama of revolution. I do not propose to lead a procession in Perpignan when there is no adequate social understanding behind this manifestation. Useless heroics are a curse. Diligent work in cells and trade unions, the interweaving of theoretical education in Marxism with the day-to-day education obtained through enforcing workers' demands; here are both the strategy and the sniping of class warfare. Comrades, this meeting is over. It is a failure. May it lead to better things."

The unattractive man got off the platform. The discouraged faithful took down the red flags and banners, uncomplaining, but cheated of a climax. Cécile's bus rounded the corner; she took it full of reflections on the complexity of the social scene.

It was so much more difficult than the merry girl had ever dreamed. What sustained men like the speaker of the evening? No applause rewarded him. No grandiose moments. What kept this weary fellow paying out his ideas? Fame, the incentive of actor, soldier, author, athlete, was not his. When the scientist at the Arago laboratory thought well of himself it was as a high priest of science, of truth.

She snatched a few ideas out of some pamphlets she bought.

To talk frequently, in an uninspired tone, knowing that any one speech might be without results, that there were millions of other ants like you working in other lands, and that in some remote time, perhaps long after your death, your work might count perhaps for something, what sustained anyone in that? To work for a revolution, not as a great dramatic event such as Victor Hugo and Thomas Paine conjectured but as a continuous stream of small incidents, which at last leaps over a dam and becomes the Mississippi of man's fate? Nor was this the ideal.

She read the pamphlets until four in the morning, intoxicated. These drab speakers and writers, as she thought them, for she was used to surcharged speech, expected to defend a revolution through years of misery, of dictatorship, of terror, of a hundred errors of management and of treason? Would the results be beautiful?

She read amazed. The new society, they said, would not be ideal, or utopian. It must carry in its vitals the diseases of an older nourishment until the new food of history was digested. The orator of the night could not even expect that his children would live decently. They, and perhaps their children, it appeared, would spend a part of their lives in washing off the dirt of centuries, in treating the scabs and sores that decaying capitalism had left on men.

Cécile saw the dawn of the next day as though it were the dawn of a millennium of struggle. What love and devotion to their species these rebels showed! What potent optimism! Here was love beyond the satisfaction of the moment, founded on sure adversity, without the comfort of illusions. How different from her own passions which demanded immediate satisfaction, required that the cycle of desire and fulfilment be closed soon and forever.

The net result of this excitement was that she slept late and had lunch with a pack of sheepish-looking young men, cheaply guilty after their cash embraces of last night. She disliked them. She forgot the puns and taunts with which she amused them. These passable-looking young men did not have a tithe of the beauty of the bald-headed, stocky, unimpressive orator. It was a new sensation for the sprightly girl and shook her kaleidoscope. She suddenly sickened of her escape, of her small act.

"Mamma Despard," she said, "I am paying for two weeks in advance. I have had a note from my parents that they must see me. You must tell your son, *M. le Professeur*, that I am compelled to go. I do not know when I shall return."



There was no spiritual profit in remaining at Banyuls. Unlike Onésime, she needed no eternity of interludes for education.

She returned to the home at Béziers. Firmin, in full butler's costume, offered her help with her luggage and fluttered about Mlle Cécile as he had for twenty years. There was no one at home. Monsieur was at Marseille with M. Lévy-Ruhlmann; Madame had taken a cruise to Egypt; M. François and Mme Adèle were at Cannes; M. Jacques and M. Foulques were attending the Davis-Cup matches at the Parc des Princes, Paris (they were betting heavily on Boussus); and M. Rashi-Mordecai and Mme Gisèle were at Mantua. Would Mademoiselle be staying long?

Cécile laughed heartily. Clearly, she was no longer considered a resident of the old home; she was a guest. "As the Jews say, who is minding the business?"

"Oh, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann and Monsieur have consolidated their organizations, there is only nominally a separate firm of Denys Renouvier et Fils."

"I suppose that old rascal has sold Papa share certificates. We are becoming modern and soon we will be ruined."

"Mlle Cécile, you are as gay as ever." Firmin bowed.

"Do you mind, Firmin, if I live here?"

"Mlle Cécile has her pleasantries."

"And do you mind, Firmin, if I am mistress of this neglected mansion? Let me see the household accounts as soon as my luggage is deposited in my room. No, come to think of it, I will take Gisèle's room. It is I who am the daughter of the family, now, the only one."

"As Mlle commands."

The servants, Isidore and Lucille, now married, came up to offer their felicitations on the return of Cécile. Her assumption of authority impressed them, it was the old man's energy revived. "Really one can have some faith in the family again when one sees her," Firmin observed to the others.

He brought up his household accounts on a silver platter and looked respectfully at the managerial girl. She went over the accounts, pointed out his perquisites, robberies, false entries, padded accounts. She tapped his old forehead with her pencil and told him to be good. Old Firmin went out with tears. At last the Maison Renouvier had an organization. He preferred a general in command to a lackadaisical system that permitted him to steal.

*Unhorsed and Jilted*

SIMONE LAMOUROUX had fancied that her quarrel with Onésime, of which she had written so tartly to his brother, was permanent. She had flirted with another, but he proved of even more insubstantial stuff. Pretending to hate the very memory of Onésime, she sought him everywhere, "to give him a piece of her mind." She looked for him in the haunts of artists, in the Provençal Arts and Crafts Museum (Muséon Arlaten), in the aisles of the cathedral of Saint-Trophime. Knowing his romanticism, she made excursions to the history-soaked ruins of Les Baux. They evoked the past but gave no trace of her living companion. She tried to paint. She covered folderfuls of paper with charcoal, crayon, pencil. Her rivers and clouds, leas and forests, carried the features of Onésime. She was a fool to get into pets, to lose a lover.

On Sundays, when her father freed her from his books, she drifted down the canal of the Rhône to Buc, in the bright-blue boats. Outstretched, she invoked flakes of cloud in a disconsolate soliloquy. "Born to love, mad for the voice of men, the sight of their bodies the only thing I really care about, why do I lose it? Acid, saucy demons, steal down from my ready mind, and paint my heart with vinegar. Oh if I could be simple, sing unashamed my love. Show him I am a victim of love. What do I care how he would use me because he knew I was putty in his hairy hands? We French are mad. We never want to be another's dupe. I wish I had been born where girls are fools but fools that seize divinity, God's fools. On a Bavarian lake, a silly girl that adores her idiotic swain in Tirolese dress, kisses the emptiness of his skull. But she is happy and I am miserable."

Simone rose in the boat. She tore her handkerchief and chewed the remnants. Her face was distorted by the horror of losing love. She broke out into wild poetic laments, like the ladies of the East filling the wounds of the gored Adonis with tears. "All my inwards were released in song and dance. It gave him understanding, it

gave him peace. My throat was oiled with my lyrics, my liver beat up its sugar with sweet and constant resolution, my lungs swept their oxygen into my dark scarlet chemistry. Hell's laboratory, of what are we made? Lovely fabric of my dress, spun out of silkworms, look at the contrast with the hideous girl whose nasty viscera you shield." Her wild strains grew and came out louder than the wild waterfowl's fearful call, stronger than the hawk's raw screech. "My letter to his brother! Oh, why did I send that stupid message? I'll be despised."

Onésime had forgotten Cécile in the meantime, and was lost in love for Simone, Simone who had quarrelled with him, as she did with everyone. Her passionate squalls, arising out of nowhere, conjuring up in a moment from a brazier of excitement a smoke of reproaches and insults, had driven Onésime away even from Arles. He had taken up residence in the home of a barber at Aix-en-Provence near by. He worked at a pharmaceuticals plant. It prepared a special solution for the mouth. The enthusiastic manufacturer was forever demonstrating it by gargling. Altogether a pleasant place. It smelled fresh and hygienic.

One evening a flock of automobiles drew up at the barber's shop. The automobile procession reached hundreds and came down in the locust way. They were equipped with immense batteries of moving-picture cameras, flashlight contrivances, loud-speakers. *Paris-Sport*, *L'Auto*, *Paris-Soir*, *Le Matin*, *Le Journal*, and so on, were painted on these trucks.

Mad young men were howling their well-trimmed heads off. Onésime was being shaved by the barber at the time. A dozen young men swept by the yellow bead curtain and focused their cameras on the barber. What the deuce had happened?

"Monsieur," they questioned in chorus, "what will you do with it?" Soon the usually deserted shop was jammed with eager men, all with their notebooks full open, their pencils poised for work. "Do with what?" the frightened barber demanded.

Onésime sat bolt upright in the chair; was there a collective madness, a biting of the community by an infected dog? Otherwise, why the rabies? Finally, after every competitive reporter spouted the news, interrupted by every other, the sense of the business came out. The barber had won the great prize in the lottery, five million francs, at that time £66,660.

He recovered from his surprise, left the half-shaved face of

Onésime covered with lather and in a moment became vain as a coxcomb. He posed, smiled, gave interviews, overflowed with himself; the modest man of 8:15 P.M. was an impossible fellow by 8:27 P.M. The reporters were soon struggling with the population of Aix-en-Provence. The Black Hole of Calcutta was the rival of that barber's shop. The neighbours crowded on to make demands for loans, advances, anything in fact, after some quick congratulations. The barber turned on his half-shaved client and boarder. "M. Sabatier, do me the honour of leaving my house. I shall require it. It is not proper for a millionaire to let out lodgings. You understand."

"My congratulations, Monsieur," Onésime volunteered but the barber heard nothing but the remarks of the well dressed. He thought at once of buying a Hispano-Suiza, of establishing himself in a château, of offering a free permanent wave to the pretty women of Aix. He waved his hands, expostulated, and patronized the reporters who were poor. At first he rejoiced humanly in the handshakes of his neighbours, but within an hour was cold and looked upon them as sharpers aiming at his wealth. By midnight he had traversed the economic history of sordid man. He was an awful fool and the delight of the newspapermen.

For Onésime this *bouffe* performance was another proof that he was out of his element. It compelled him to stop and take stock of his position. This wandering must end. He must return to Béziers and settle down and take care of Mother, a truce to girls, and so he took the bus by way of Arles, just for a visit.

And of course called on Simone. When he entered the office M. Lamouroux greeted him warmly. "My dear friend, you worked so well for me. Why are you so erratic? I am sorry. I have got a man to replace you, not a tenth as good, on my honour, not a tenth. But he has a six months' engagement. I haven't the means to pay him his advance salary, and pay you as well. You understand, M. Sabatier. I am sure Simone remembers you. I think she has mentioned you several times. But why do you come back to Arles? It is a city of the dead, its business went so long ago. I wouldn't stay here a moment if it weren't that I was born and became established here. Why don't you make your way to Marseille, Paris? I can't possibly imagine why you came back, M. Sabatier."

Simone was in the back room, stamping about, angry with

herself, yet afraid to go out and face Onésime who would see she was steeped in love.

She stirred an immense noise preparing dinner. She was making the standard Provençal dish, *bouillabaisse*, with many ingredients, much odour, and much mess. She tossed the various kinds of fish into the pot so that they fell in with a plop that could be heard in the outer room. Potatoes, tomatoes, garlic, onions were thrown in with a wild publicity, followed by a whiting, John Dory, four gurnards, crayfish, two Mediterranean whiskerless catfish (*loups*, a fish surpassing the Dover sole in fineness), two seabass, the local haddock, St. Peter's fin.

The smell soon infested the dining-room. M. Lamouroux grew hungry, Onésime waited. Father sniffed harder as olive oil was added and he inhaled the abundant smells of the bouquet of thyme, laurel, parsley, fennel, salt, pepper and the inevitable Southern saffron. After ten minutes in the kitchen, her hair streaming with the vapours of boiling water, Simone was sufficiently calm to be able to make a gauche entry in style.

She came out and invited, "Papa, come in, the *bouillabaisse* is nearly ready. Oh, it is you, Onésime! What an unexpected visit! I am sure you will join us, M. Sabatier."

This was the girl that had been lamenting for weeks that she did not give herself away completely.

Onésime stood on his high horse, and both went around the three-ring circus. "Mademoiselle, in the first place you knew I was here; your surprise is artificial and does you little credit. Second, it was you that dismissed me for no reason, not I you. Third, it is time you acquainted your father with our relationship."

This was the stodgy boy that had sworn he would never put himself in a position opposed to Simone.

Simone did not sulk. She banged the door and went back to work. M. Lamouroux asked, "Well, well, I suppose you fell in love with Simone? So does everybody. Literally everybody. And the consequence? She will braid St. Catherine's tresses. One of these days I am going to fill the cathedral with the young men that have proposed to her; I will string their broken hearts as a votive offering to St. Agnes as well. But in the meantime, Simone is a superb cook as well as a shrew, and we ought to savour her remarkable *bouillabaisse*. The Réserve at Marseille could take lessons

from her. She could teach the King of *bouillabaisse* at Sète the first lessons in royalty."

The family party sat down; Simone refused to act as waiter, "The girl has her day off and I've done my work."

Onésime had to serve.

"Yes, M. Sabatier," said M. Lamouroux, "you should marry my Simone. You think you're an artist, but take my advice. You look natural behind a cash register and poor behind an easel. Have you painted lately? I mean have you done any artistic work whatever lately?"

"I resent your remarks, M. Lamouroux," Onésime said hotly. "I am an artist. I have felt it since I was a boy. I used to cry in the vineyards, hoping for the day I could go to the Beaux-Arts. I am now near twenty-five and I know my vocation. I despise business."

"As you please, M. Sabatier, but I am no fool. No one could be as expert in it as you are, if you hated business as much as you think. But many a fine carpenter has thought himself a defeated sculptor. In France especially, art is a ritual."

"You remind me, M. Lamouroux, of my brother Stéphane. Now there's a fellow who hasn't a scrap of the artist in him. Pushing, realist, but no artist. Yet he was ahead of me in school. The wooden professors gave his uninspired designs much higher marks than mine."

"Maybe they weren't wrong," Lamouroux guessed. "But let's see your canvases." In the dinner-table conference Simone said nothing. Onésime wished to drown her father. He noticed nothing; he held the centre of the floor by divine right.

They adjourned; went into the office, closed for Saturday afternoon. Onésime exhibited six water colours he had brought with him. They were laboured imitations of Van Gogh, sun-dazzled, primitive perception, fairly well composed. "They lack salt," said Simone, always honest on art, "and I may say that, while you wear the clothes of another man well, Onésime, it is still a ready-made suit. No, my dear friend, forget Van Gogh, it is not possible that two men see this countryside in exactly the same way. And if they did, there would be no need for the second to paint. Surely Onésime you must have other sketches to show, other efforts."

Onésime opened his valise and brought out all that he could show. There was quite a sampling. It was competent, serious,



was no longer asphyxiated by her dreams of Onésime, she could tolerate the burden.

Her understanding was sure; Onésime was an excellent organizer but every trait of him contradicted the artist. Well, he would make a good second-best life. The more he babbled of art, the more he worked at it, the more she knew him for a Boileau and not a Shakespeare, a Sedaine not a Molière.

"He's adequate," she communed characteristically. "Well, who is much else? But how joyous if I stormed heaven, saw genius face to face, and it fell in love with my face! A beautiful one too." She looked into the mirror and spent a long time in worshipping her beauty. "God, if I were a man, I would be intoxicated with my own beauty."

She put a ribbon about her hair. "Pretty, no, incredibly beautiful, passionate. I speak to you, my reflection, as a painter, you, worthy subject." She laughed. "Conceit is the only pure joy. Why depreciate myself? Simone Lamouroux, worship yourself, paint like a woman intoxicated with herself. The hills surround your feet; the skies are nailed to your eyes; the clouds are moved by your lids. Your ears pour out music from their drums; they take the tones of horns and trumpets."

She rejoiced, "Bow low, Mlle Lamouroux. Why, you bow beautifully, Simone. None other is as graceful. Sing your praises, girl, sing them high." She watched her smile grow. "Look at the movement of my lips; there is a life in them, no, better, an annunciation of a peaceful death. No, not quite that. What a ridiculous beast I am to paint the faces of others, mirror their souls, when I cannot be sure of my own."

She wrote into her journal: "I have to-day viewed myself as an artist . . ." Threw down the journal and called out to herself, "Song, that is direct speech." She sang *En revenant des nocés* with its tender regrets. She stamped and cried, "No one else's music? Simone, sing," and she poured out melodies she would never recapture, racy, potent, ever flowing, her serenade to herself, to a worthy woman, and her strong mind and passions.

Onésime called out from below, "Are you ready to go to the *landes*, dearest? We can get the car of M. Renaud to Lunel."

The *landes* at Lunel were exhibitions of bullfighting in the Provençal manner, extremely skilled and hazardous, but not gory. The rider of the white horse circles the bull, with intense speed. He



is a *banderillero* on horseback. The horse is of the kind painted on carrousels, in the early pictures of Titian, or in the revived antique of Chirico. It is small, Arab, milk-white; its mane rich and cream-white, but silky and broad; its head and nose (with large red nostrils) more sculptured than the race horse. It has a dream motion when moving fast, and no matter how often it turns it never fatigues and never becomes dizzy. It curves about the bull on an incline. Its speed is fantastic while it cavorts, moving anti-clockwise. The bull sees quickly. It is a small bull, selected for agility rather than fighting qualities. At the same time the speed of the circling about it renders it ferocious with hatred. Its horns are untipped; there is grave risk to horse and rider when it attacks. Compared to the gross attacks of large bulls on helpless blinded nags, the worst aspect of the Spanish game, the Provençal contest is a true sport, a breathless show.

The horse is guided by the right hand; in the left hand the rider carries a cockade. The attached streamers are arranged with great taste, the button beautifully bunched, the same rich colour scheme carried out in the floral button as in the silk streamers. The object of the game is to fasten the cockade painlessly on the neck of the fighting bull, head on, without hurting horse or rider. There are a hundred varieties of the *landes*, far more diverse even than the primitive bullfights of Spain before they were stylized. But at the small arena of Lunel, the most simple form alone was shown.

The rider was the star of the Camargue, Lolo Priaulx. His father owned a superb herd of cattle. The boy was twenty. His face had an absolute refinement, his body was graceful; his devilish horse riding, his unity, on the beautifully chased saddle, with the movement of his mystic-white horse, his poisoning of the cockade, were an intoxication. Lolo Priaulx was good-natured. He rejoiced in circus exhibitions before the contest, picked up ladies' handkerchiefs at unabated speed, lifted bouquets without losing a petal, and offered them to the ladies with a courtly address. He was the hero of each and every girl. They dreaded his danger, they breathed a collective sigh of relief when he escaped the bull.

The contests ended gloriously for Lolo. He met four bulls, defeated them handily; he was covered by a shower of applause and received a reward of five thousand francs. Simone was beside herself. "I love that man, I love perfection, there it is." At first

Onésime thought that acclaim only the poetic licence of woman. Soon he knew it was literal.

"Well done, my beautiful boy," she cried. "I must throw myself at his feet."

Onésime objected, "A cowboy? A cowboy of the Vaccarès? Can the dolt read?"

"Long live the *razetaire*!" Simone cried, waving her handkerchief, then, taking off her belt, embroidered in *petit point*, she called out, "Sieur Lolo, take the cockade from between the horns and I give you a score of kisses." She stood up, a beauty, the admired of all men, the catmeat of all the girls. Onésime trembled with hatred and jealousy but he dared not speak.

Lolo did this far more dangerous stunt, one usually performed in an impromptu arena closed by wagons. It took him twenty minutes. The bull was clever and full of ruses, sudden in his change of front. He grazed the thigh of Lolo, but did no real hurt; and at last, the happy rider took the cockade from out his immense shoulder from between the horns, unhurt. He danced about the ring three times, then overleapt the barriers, drove the horse up the balcony stairs, and bowed suavely as he offered the cockade to Simone. He was a mocking cowboy, a primitive who hated the clerkish airs of city men.

"Would Monsieur like to try the art?" he asked roguishly of Onésime. "Gladly," snapped the humiliated escort, "gladly. I would like to show that a clean job can be done without monkey manners."

He rushed down to the guardian's gate. It was the barrier tended by Prialx *père*. "Monsieur, Monsieur, do not attempt this, it is beyond the skill of nine cowboys out of ten."

"Be damned to you, you're for your son; it's an amateur trick and you make it a mighty business. Give me a horse and release the bull."

Simone did not care. If Onésime could make good, splendid; she had stirred the man. If he died, splendid; he fell in a superb action, a gesture to hold the woman he loved. Lolo viewed him without contempt. He was naturally sporting despite his taunts.

Onésime mounted the horse quite well. He had often supervised large wine fields from horseback, and he was fairly skilled, especially in quick trotting. He watched the bull with a single eye. He never deviated from his horns. He did not look towards Simone.

The laughing mob quieted. He did very well. At last he came near the fatigued bull, lifted the cockade, showed it round, and saw even Simone and Lolo among those cheering the daring volunteer. While he was cavorting, the bull rushed at him. He had not watched and so was caught and his flank ripped open. Despite the pain, he protected the horse, reined him to the barrier, and then fainted as his thigh poured blood.

His quick move saved him from a fatal gash. The attending doctors were frightened and soon an ambulance came from Montpellier to deposit Onésime in the immense General Hospital. Simone liked his pluck, but coldly preferred the beautiful motions of Lolo. They were harmonious, a dream of co-ordination. For the sufferings of Onésime she did not give twopence, for he was hurt in a gallant cause.

The next three months Onésime was repaired by the skilled contrivances of surgeons who tried to save him from lameness. They won. Even his nerves would run unimpaired. He had a long vacation in which to contemplate the primeval sources of Simone's loves.

Two weeks after the accident, Simone calmly called. She did not ask how the patient was getting on, but instantly scorned and berated him. "Well, I am glad to see science has extended the life of another mediocrity. Hospital surgeons have no taste, no love of quality. They must hate art for they would preserve Venus or a leper indifferently."

"God, speak humanly," said Onésime.

"You mean the old humane stuff. Never. I am humane to what I love or like. Now for news. I'm marrying Lolo Priaulx."

"That . . ."

"Dodo. That's what you wanted to say. He is the best herdsman of the lagoon. He's graceful, he speaks simply, he knows nature, he's full of folk song and legend, he dances like a faun, he's a good son, but for you, a nobody, he's a dodo." Then she let loose. "You imitate others' paintings. You get your ideas from ink, book-fed fool. I get mine from cattle grazing, from herbs, salt marsh, and the raptures of the heart. Good-bye, my colourless friend. I have met a *man*! He will stab my body. We shall be blessed at Arles in the Lady chapel, of our patron St. George, at the Major Church."

She tossed her long, olive, shining nose into the air. The sick man looked up into her spreading nostrils.

"Simone Lamouroux," he recited with the care of a fortune-teller, "whatever you think, you will never marry this Priaulx. I shall see to that. You laugh, you think I am helpless. You see a nurse hovering about with a chamber pot; I look ridiculous. But feeble as I am, I tell you, you will never marry Lolo Priaulx and it is your bedridden lover that will stop it."

"To what a sweet lad I was once engaged," Simone mocked. "He fights for me. He seeks to better another man. Now my jealous knight is bunged, he has lost; therefore, if you please, he claims the prize! You, you want to win, heads or tails. Your work couldn't compare with Lolo, your love doesn't either."

"Perhaps my eardrums too were hurt for I hear nothing. I am deaf but not dumb. You shall not marry the cowherd."

"Cowherd! I have spent two weeks with him. I, the once proud Simone, ran after him. I said, artist, forget your family and education; marry the right man. I visited him at his ranch, rode out with him on the misty roads, jumped over fences mounted on our half-wild horses. You tell me, I shall not marry him. Every dunce is an enemy of his brilliant rival. Onésime, such a missionary devotion to stupidity! Don't blackmail me, I can hold my own. If you stab at me, if you shoot at him, you will miss; if you throw vitriol at me, the wind shall carry it back to you. I don't ask to marry by your leave."

"I hear nothing, you shall not marry Lolo."

This resolution of Onésime frightened Simone. He shone under a new aspect.

"Why do you invade my life, why?" she asked.

"Not for myself, you may never want me. But for you. I have known you for what you are and you mustn't fall victim to a girl's distorted dreams. You must not bind yourself to a tribe that cannot understand divorce, that will follow you with a hatred as deep as a Corsican's. Think what you will about how intense life must be, we are limited; we can marry only the civilized. I left one girl and a heritage of five million francs once, because I knew she should marry a better man. I have despaired of you too. I am a stupid knight-errant, then. Good enough to tilt at cowboys, that's all."

Simone was less indignant for the moment. "I leave you, to follow my own fate, whatever you think."

She rose on her Cuban heels to her full height, looked down the ward, saw it as a great canvas. The forty faces that dotted the white

covers were a sort of shooting gallery of assorted grotesque heads. She waved her good-bye to Onésime. He cried out loud, "I will stop your wedding." She turned back, sick of his persistence, and slapped the cheeks of the helpless man. She slapped him again and again, slapped harder with every blow. She was carried away by her frenzy. She must stop the mouth of this croaking raven, this fool with his sullen refrain of doom.

The house-surgeons rushed in along with hospital attendants. From forty horrified patients, the cries of solidarity came out. They demanded justice from the depths of ripped appendices, extracted kidney spaces, silver-tubed sphincters, the ragtag and bobtail of medical science. Simone was pinioned, her shrieks smothered by the lusty palms of doctors. At the door she was warned of a long prison sentence for this outrage. She laughed at their warnings, stamped her foot, denounced the horrified doctors as idiots who spent their lives in saving the wrecks of mankind instead of sweeping out the whole crowd of weaklings and building up a race out of the hardy alone. She wallowed in her sudden cruelty.

She left determined to advance her marriage with Lolo before Onésime could come out of the hospital. Onésime, meantime, hoped that Lolo would insist on the ceremonial delay required in his primitive region. The patients consoled with him, the doctors examined him anew. To the accompaniment of sedative and clyster, he mused over the possibilities of saving Simone.

## *The Cowboy's Wedding*

THE banner of the Fraternity of St. George, patron saint of Camargue cowboys, was lifted high. Their foundation date, January 2, 1513, was pointed out by the master of ceremonies; it was embroidered in silver cloth above the image of the squealing dragon pierced by the mounted saint. Prayers were said. The mayor of Arles, in a too-long allocution, pointed out the need for co-operation in the threatened fen lands; how the need for saving the republic of herdsmen and fishers against sea, dune and marsh grass had made the common good the supreme aim of the Camargue.

Lolo Priaulx held up the second banner, that of Sainte-Marie Salomé. His arm band of white satin, fringed, was that of his first communion. In his left hand, he held that of Simone. Their engagement was blessed. In two months, on the great festival of Sainte-Marie-Jacobé, May 25, they were to be married in the fortress church of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, the two Maries of the Sea. There, in a city out of time, more remote from the haunts of men even than Aiguesmortes, Simone was to become a herdsman's woman, to live in a white-calcimined, thatch-covered, marsh dwelling.

That night, in the shattered arena of Arles, largest Roman amphitheatre in Gaul, but now a ruin, the encampment of herdsmen rested. Twenty-four families had sent their wagons, horses, cattle, women and children as well as heads of the households, to see the engagement of their common cousin, Lolo Priaulx.

Simone felt superb. She was entering a communal society, one in which common effort was so necessary if one was to live at all; where the individual was good-natured, helpful, but still individually daring, mad for competitive prowess in festivals, bullfights, rodeos, cattle branding, horse racing.

Two thousand years before, the Camargue was the apple of the eye of Roman governors. Arles, its capital, built large sections of the Roman navy out of its dense forests. Now there were scarcely any trees in the land. Its population had retreated. Fever and malaria

had taken off their tenths at each affliction. There was practically no one left. The heroes of the marsh now were not men but fabled cattle.

There was the philosopher bull who bellowed all night, crying amid his *manade*. His words were wise, thought his worshipping guardians. He bellowed of the lagoon of the Vaccarès that would some day eat up the land. His noise predicted the falling of their few houses into the marsh, the end of it all.

At night the tauromaniacs would listen in scattered cabins and seek to translate the bellowings. When would the sacred city of the two Maries slide into the sea? When would the dykes, got up by engineers from Paris, give way at the signal of the prophetic bull? From the twelfth century, the cunning of count and king, fraternity and church, science and the army, had been exerted to stop the sea, to save the delta lands of the Rhône from becoming a malarial swamp, with here and there a reed, pushing above the victorious sea, to remind one that fine cattle lands had once been there. The father of Lolo swore that he heard the philosophic bull one night bellow in tones that swung, predicting the end of their land but prophesying that in the muddy islands of their lagoon, the French, driven south by the Germans, would found a new Venice, there to begin a more glorious history. The eye of the French would turn from the dark hills of Burgundy and the chalk lands of Picardy outward to the warmer beauties of Africa, to the diadem of Damascus.

These legends were told about the campfires in the ruined amphitheatre. There were also encamped on the other side some ten gipsy families, come up from Italy, to go through their round of fortune-telling, horse swapping, and vagrant labour. The men of the Camargue, unlike most citizens, were kind to the nomads, for the two Maries are the patron saints of gipsies, and the church of the two Maries is their pilgrimage centre, their holy sepulchre.

St. Sarah of the Egyptians, Nubian servant of the saints, had come, said the legend, to the two Maries. Here her bones were laid. Her relics were holy, and the outcast people were permitted to worship her in this Christian commune, where they were chased out of other churches as heathens, as Bohemians, Egyptians, or as the dark-skinned envoys of the dirtiest devils. The gipsies came with their ancestral copper coins to rub the sacred stone and get a bit of its blessed powder, and so cure their ophthalmia. A true outcast race, they were happy to worship only a servant of the saints. Pariahs, untouchables, they were permitted no higher patron.

The two encampments exchanged cigarettes, proverbs, memories, songs, trinkets, food. Simone was active among the gipsies. This was new to her, for in Arles the police usually treated them with cruelty and moved them on. Mothers shielded their children at their approach, horse owners got their revolvers ready. Lolo was known to them in person. They rejoiced that he had won his bride by his skill in placing and extracting the cockade.

Two months passed. The end of May was an epoch of steady preparations at the Priaulx cabin. It was located amid the sedge at the rim of the lagoon of Vaccarès. Across the rivulet was the scientific station of the Acclimatization Society of Paris, there to preserve the rich fauna and flora of the region, one of the few places in Europe where the curious can still come upon numerous unique species, a land swarming with individual creation.

The director of the little station was a folklore enthusiast as well. He spent his days on the reed lands where he trapped birds, fish, molluscs and insects, carefully dried his floral specimens, and at night sat about with the Priaulx family, as brother with brother, and heard their stories, which in the deep of night he wrote down with fidelity. Even where their stories were monotonous or their songs vague reflections of boulevard vaudeville, he never deviated. He put no gloss on their thinking: that was not there in fact. A man of strict veracity, he loved his people.

He was named best man for Lolo at the wedding. M. Lamouroux, ashamed of the whole business, called on him twice urging him to dissuade the Priaulx clan, but the scientist was their friend and ally and he preferred them to the showy radical of Arles. A fiery rebel, he did not like nice people anyhow. Certainly he preferred co-operators to business men.

Simone saw little of Lolo, for that was not considered seemly among the primitive people of the Gulf of the Lion. Chastity was enforced with aboriginal ferocity. Only gipsy girls were allowable for pleasure, and then their own family had to be reckoned with.

On May 24, Simone Lamouroux, accompanied by her unwilling father, left Arles for the two Maries. She had found that Onésime was still bedridden, he could not be out for a week. It was just about time, for she was not too sure that he was only a *vantard*. A banner flew on the car, now finding its path over the potholes in the miserably paved causeway. It was the flag of the servant Sarah, lent by the gipsies. They would be there to greet her at the church.



The car passed near the home of the Priaulx, but they must not stop there—that would be unfortunate. The great aeroplane from Saint-Louis in Senegal passed over the marsh. Then there followed a flight of flamingos, thousands of them, arranged like an air review. The sky was crowded with portents, whether good or bad no one knew. The cabins carried bull horns over their thatch roofs wherewith to conjure away evil spirits from the marriage of the *razetaire*. In front of their doors were displayed cunning figures, covered with reed (woven with bone needles), of salt shakers, pepper mills, flour mills, to feed the spirits, or to entice them to stop at the homes where they could eat. Their maleficent appearance at the wedding would be circumvented.

The marriage of Lolo and Simone was a matter of consequence to the dying population, for it rarely had recruits.

The town of Les Saintes-Maries, completely dominated by its high, gloomy, powerful fortress parish church, came out of the marsh with a manly decision. The houses were huddled about the all-protecting church. Their lanes, four feet wide, were covered with hundreds of gipsies, cowboys, fishers. The car passed a crowd of herdsmen, their long lances carried as in a bullfight, stampeding into town across dunes and saltbushes, on milk-white horses. The riders were all in white shirts and red ties, and seated on chased-leather saddles.

The reliquary of the two Maries was borne aloft: it was a crude ship with the two saints, quaintly and childishly sculptured in silver, looking with chipped-eyed devotion on the faithful. The local clergy took the reliquary into a sailing boat. They waited until the procession of white horses and riders and of fishermen and their families had marched up and down the entire beach. Then they blessed the sea, told it not to invade the land and to be calm for the fisherfolk. The waves were still, religiously obedient. The gipsies thought this day perfect; they wailed the praises of Sarah the servant.

The guard of honour was drawn up on the sands. Twelve cavaliers advanced into the sea, their horses knee-deep in the surf. The youths rolled their trousers. Ten priests were taken off the large sardine fishing boat; the other boat, loaded with flowers, was beached later. The service adjourned to the church.

The procession of the believers had to go by a jeering collection of sceptics. These were now in the majority and were ruthless in their iconoclasm. Their rudeness did not disturb the faithful. They could do nothing because the mayor, a violent unbeliever, hated the

traditions of the district, and the police were under his orders. The magic of the olden days was going. Only the scientific station worker was both a communist and sympathetic to the traditions of the region.

The church was crowded. Lolo Priaulx, his father, and the scientist were on one side. Simone, a gipsy girl, and the rational M. Évariste Lamouroux were on the other. Choir and organ were going.

Outside, the guard of horsemen, who had saluted the ceremony of the sea, were stationed beside the church. They were the friends and companions of Lolo. Twenty-four, twelve on each side, they crossed their lances to form the triumphal arch under which bride and bridegroom must pass after the ceremony.

In the church, before the rite of marriage was gone through, the priest took a coin from the gipsy girl and rubbed it on the sacred stone of the altar of the reliquary. Its powder was sprinkled over Simone's belly to make her fecund. This powder had never failed. It produced a really frightening number of babies.

The ceremony began. No sooner was it fairly on its way, the priest facing the altar and invoking, than the guard of honour passed through, as an exception, a man in crutches, swinging wildly. It was bad luck to open the church door at such a moment. But who can be cruel to a cripple? The man in crutches came down the centre aisle and stood behind the couple. He acted.

"Stop this stupid ritual, stop it at once." The priest turned, the crowd was aghast. Lolo faced Onésime yet he could not strike before the altar, for it was sacrilege. The cripple held them tight in their taboos. He threatened to utter obscene curses, to spit on the cross, to tear the altar cloth, to throw the Blessed Sacrament into the dirt, to pour out the blood of God. The Huguenot had no fears; this was all rubbish to him. He had sworn that this marriage would not take place. He spoke only to the priest—he commanded him as would the Pope.

At the back of the church were two gendarmes. They stepped outside to ask the mayor what they should do. "France is a free country," the fanatical opponent observed. "If they refuse to go on with the ceremony because they are afraid of this cripple's words, what can I do? Unless he destroys or steals their property, you can do nothing."

The Swiss Guard, old, fat, puffing, toddled out and from the depths of his sixteenth-century belt and silk stockings, he cried for

help. "*M. le Maire*," he stammered, taking off his sweaty tricornered hat and feather, "*M. le Maire*, the madman has gone by the couple and is sitting on the altar of God."

The gendarmes entered. The gipsies were on their knees mumbling, the guests dazed, the priest shouting. Holding his two crutches aloft, Onésime, seated on the altar, was delivering challenges. He had done no harm beyond sacrilege. "You cannot marry this woman, I forbid it. I will stay here, I will resist if you remove me."

Simone wanted no courage. She went beyond the altar rail and pulled off Onésime. He lifted his left crutch and struck at her over the shoulder. She went down. He slipped and his right crutch flew into the air; his head struck the altar stone; he was made unconscious. Lolo's father cried like a beggar beaten and robbed by thugs.

The cripple was removed by the police. The church was in confusion, the priest dubious about what to do after an altar had been profaned, Lolo's father afraid of demoniac influence. The gipsies were sure they would trade no horses for a year, the cowboys anxious to speed to the *marie* with their lances and pierce Onésime. Simone, beaten at last, cried loud and long. It was decided to adjourn the marriage. The Priaux clan were uneasy. The outside woman did not portend good days.

Lolo kissed her good-bye and told her fervidly he would join her in Arles when the shock was over, and that there they would have the marriage performed in a conventional church. Simone left weeping, convinced that the spell was broken.

Home in Arles, she stopped her tears and became bitterly ashamed of her weakness. She walked through the rooms of her house for hours. Lolo's magic was shattered, Onésime's crime could not be punished. What he had done was irreparable.

She circled about wondering what could have been his motive. He could not win her. Surely he could not hate Lolo so much as that. In a way he was to be admired. He was a dullard but a brave man to come into that isolated town and trample on the religious and customary habits of its crude people. Was he really a knight-errant of women? Was such a man conceivable? In our age? It traduced reason.

Then she lost grip on herself, and cursed the name of Onésime. She did not curse it with as much conviction as she might. The

experience with Lolo 'had satisfied her exotic thirsts. Perhaps she needed no aftercup of marriage. She began in tears, rose into rage, and ended unclear. She went to bed, after this drama-filled day, surrounded by indefinite conceptions, wandering without a fixed direction. She cried into the dark room, "Lead me, some friend, lead me. I am adrift."

*A Lover Dejected a New Love Can Find*

It was eight in the morning the next day. The outside bell rang persistently. Simone, her face drawn, weary after a night of weeping, tossing and despair, dragged herself to the door. A tall man, about twenty-six, presentable, serious, not too striking, nodded stiffly and asked, "Is this the home of Mlle Simone Lamouroux?"

"You are speaking to her."

"Allow me to introduce myself. You have already written to me. I am Stéphane Sabatier from Saint-Jean-du-Gard."

Simone was flustered and hurt. She gritted her teeth and was about to say something caustic when she reflected that Stéphane was not to blame. "Enter, Monsieur, you are welcome. Excuse my appearance but I had a shock yesterday. A Sabatier. An ill-favoured name in my history."

Stéphane was hesitant. "I judged as much by your note. If you are displeased by my visit, please tell me."

"Not at all." Simone was governed by politeness, whatever her excitements. "You misunderstand, Monsieur. But the offences of your brother, at the time I wrote, were venial compared to his later actions."

Stéphane expressed concern.

"Yesterday, he broke up my wedding, that's all."

He smiled. "At the altar, Mademoiselle?"

"At the altar, the tawdry actor." She stopped and flung her hands wide apart.

"I am most sorry, Madame. I offer you the regrets of our family. If my mother knew, she would join me. She would be grief-stricken, Madame." It was not the formal, polished regrets always ready in polite French speech, but it was his tenderness in altering Mademoiselle to Madame, because of the broken wedding, that touched Simone. She was grateful for any consideration, for she knew that her father was quietly congratulating himself on the outcome.

"I came to ask you where I could find my brother but of course that doesn't matter now."

"On the contrary," Simone spoke spitefully, "I know jolly well where he is and I hope he stays there. He is held at the police station at Les Saintes-Maries. I hope," she added viciously, "they lock him up with his crutches, and brain him with them. A few months behind bars might teach him to mind his business."

The postman called and left a telegram. It read:

SORRY INTERFERE WITH YOUR VENGEANCE CHARGES DISMISSED MY  
ADDRESS BÉZIERS CARE RENOUVIER IF YOU CARE TO PURSUE VENGEANCE  
AFFECTIONATE REGARDS

ONÉSIME

"Read that telegram," she stormed. "Read it, Monsieur. The last insult of a rotter. Acquitted, he rejoices he has hurt me. He crows over my humiliation. In effect, he says, 'I am going to another woman, Cécile.' Your brother, Monsieur, is insupportable, detestable, foul."

"Forgive me, Madame, if . . ."

"Call me Mademoiselle. Thanks to your darling brother, that's what I am."

"Mademoiselle, since you wish. I hold no brief for him. But I, too, wrote him vicious letters, meant to humiliate, to break up his love affair by sowing doubts in his mind. Some brutal need in me; he had done me no harm."

"Charming, it seems a family trait."

"No, Mademoiselle, I was a rising business man in Marseille. I was tough on principle. I am afraid young men as a whole are not fine. When they leave off whooping like cowboys, they must pass some time as bounders. Boys are not tender. They affect a smutty attitude towards women. They are afraid the males' trade union will ridicule them if they worship girls. They are just getting over their resentment at having Mother make them clean their teeth. Beard, source of manhood; the Delilah business shows that, I think."

Simone was relieved at the digression. "Let us pass on, Monsieur, from man-versus-woman discussion. It is much too tongue-worn. You have your brother's address. I hope, though, you will stay to breakfast. Not much, ~~at~~ we have is black coffee, an apple roll and ~~marc~~."

"I shall be most pleased," Stéphane said stiffly. He was astounded at his formality. He had been talking like an Egyptian scribe. I wonder do I have a carved beard like Amenhotep, he speculated. There is only one reason why I am so polite. This woman is remarkable. She has frozen me so that I stand still and take in her beauty.

For he was impressed. He grouped her from the beginning. He placed her in many settings. The Arlésienne overcame him as she had his brother but, unlike Onésime, he really saw her. He had avoided tumbling into love by using a quaint and formal palaver.

At coffee Simone asked, "Your profession, Monsieur?"

"A wine-grower by trade, a business man by error, an artist by choice."

"An artist?" Simone strained to look mockingly cross-eyed. "God save us, another Sabatier. Do you imitate Van Gogh, also, that signboard of our city tourist bureau?"

"I do not imitate. Perhaps my poor work resembles someone else's. Forgive me, I do not know art history, I am a beginner."

She said humbly, "I am human, Monsieur."

"Mlle Lamouroux," he said simply, "I am the older brother. I will ferret out Onésime and drag him here before you and make him ask your forgiveness. I feel ashamed at his unfeeling outburst. I don't care what high motive he thinks he has, he is a fool."

"No, no, that would do no good. His outward behaviour, how does that concern me? What he has done cannot be remedied. He is what he is. I must return to my work to distract me. It is the same as yours, Monsieur, I am an artist."

"No, Mademoiselle, I am delighted! I again apologize for the family, and let me add: it is a privilege to have met you."

"You are a Sabatier, Monsieur, but there are two sorts."

"Thank you." He was fervid and bent to kiss her hand. At that moment M. Lamouroux entered. "Introduce me, Simone, although I am merely your father."

"Stéphane Sabatier."

"Related to that rascal?"

"Hypocrite," Simone sneered. "You like Onésime for what he did. My marriage to Lolo would have been an insult to your standing as a tin-pot capitalist."

"Why tin-pot?" he declaimed. "Because we are crushed by high finance? Wait till the middle classes govern under Herriot!"

Your mighty airs, your bread and butter, girl, are determined in the Chamber of Deputies. Don't laugh, you goose, at Herriot, you that would marry an ignorant cowboy, you lunatic."

"Permit me," Stéphane intervened. "I sympathize with Mlle Simone. At all events she has suffered a shock. I see she is too independent to want sympathy for herself. For that reason, I put it: I am with her opinions. My dear M. Lamouroux, there are people who simply do not understand politics. They understand their friends not as citizens but as shapes, colours, voices, emotions. Like me."

Évariste Lamouroux was a newspaper student. He believed in progress. He would gladly tear down Arles and replace it with modern business buildings. "You irritate me," he flung, in leaving. "The business offices of to-day are the museums of to-morrow. A man who is not alive to citizenship, Monsieur, profits by the work and worry of others. That means artists, one and all." He went out on a cloud of importance.

When her father left, Simone sighed, uttered her "pouf," and broke into laughter. Stéphane caught up and they pealed laughs as they simultaneously expelled their deep breaths.

"We certainly have something in common," Stéphane spoke happily.

"Our ideas run much the same on wordy people."

"You said you were an artist, Mademoiselle? Forgive me for being abrupt but it would make me happy to see your paintings. I saw nothing at Saint-Jean-du-Gard. Would you show me some? It might take your mind off the terrible happening yesterday."

Simone tried to dislike Onésime's brother. But it was not possible. She wondered if he were merely a diplomat and she deceived by his courtesy. She looked at him appraisingly. He was serious, not magnetic but determined, solid, not striking. Yet, as she told herself twice, one got the feeling that the strong stalk would flower wide and wild.

"My mind is on anything but my painting." She showed a forced pale smile. "But if you want to see them, please go upstairs to the left. My studio is there."

He mounted the stairs and she soon after him. He stumbled into part-worked oils, water colours, pastels, even some lithographs she had done at trade school. He spread them over floor, table, chairs, on boxes. She was calmed by the range of her achievements



and, for the first ten minutes that day, the image of Lolo and the interrupted wedding did not cross what she saw or said.

Stéphane looked at her work slowly. He fingered it, came back to some caricatures, ignored landscapes and *natures mortes*, no matter how impressive the play of light and depth on flowers, fish, apples and clay bowls. For two hours he went at his task gravely and without speaking. Simone watched his face relentlessly. His silence and attention slowly mesmerized her. She took out a sketch book and did over her impressions of that strong man. By the last of the series she saw that he had become lovely to her. Poignant with sorrow over Lolo, she was ashamed of her light compass, of her easily deflected magnetic needle. She saw in his face a manly striving for beauty, far removed from the æsthete.

At the end of two hours he classified her work and arranged it with a housewife's neatness. He said merely, "Thank you, Mademoiselle," and left her quietly.

She did not see him for a week. She was haunted by his strange manner, but she was haunted still more by the silence of Lolo. It made her ill when she thought of that beautiful boy, lost in taboos, sunk in dread of the strange woman and what she portended. She sickened at her lost Eden, but she also wondered how she could have sustained such a life when the first glamour was over and routine tested her love.

The Saturday following, a ravishingly sunny day, Stéphane called. He was friendly and respectful. "Mlle Simone, I wanted to mull over your work. You must think me a tortoise in reactions. But I know what you have done as much as anyone can who has not the inward eye of the creator. I flatter myself but I am sure. Besides, Mademoiselle, I have a sympathy with you that lights up my sight."

She liked his bold talk. "Don't be formal, call me Simone."

"Call you *thou*? I would love that."

"We shall *thou* each other. I shall call *thee* Stéphane, too." She looked directly into Stéphane's eyes; they were transfixed for a minute.

He threw up his hat from his hand and blurted, "Are you in love with me?" He was shocked as soon as he spoke. What impudence! On what short acquaintances! "Do not answer me, Simone. I am a fool. You are sorrowing from last week. What a barbarian I am! Egoist. Intruding myself in the most secret recesses."

"I knew you were in love with me. That was easy to see."

"How, Simone?"

"By your delay. You stay in Arles a week, you a man who must count every sou. You were afraid to call. You feel an obligation towards me. Oh how different from your brother! He covered me with confessions, revelations and kisses as soon as it was decent. You begin with an outright love. But I know you now. You will make love like an architect, like a mason rather, stone by stone."

He was grave. "Your beauty came first, then I saw your talent. Two wonderful things. I am a savage, marrying my brother's woman."

"Did you say marrying?" She was amused.

"Yes, and no withdrawal. I'm proud of that. Simone, you have loved so many, but you gave your love. I will take you into my arms, it is I that claim you. You will yield to me. I know it. I am sure."

She felt drawn to him but, though he was sure, she wavered. He was appealing, even attractive. Just out of two miserable mistakes she would not make a third one. You are a woman now, she instructed herself. "Stéphane, tell me how you know love when you feel it. I must know. I am serious."

"When I left you last week I did not see that I was madly in love. I have never felt it before. As I shut the door a rush of blood came to my head, and I staggered on the street. I plucked at a large sunflower stalk; I held on to it like a post. This week I have slept and eaten enough to sustain my heart, and neglect every other part of my terribly tired body. I have slept against my crowded fancies, against your amazing portrait. For you are beautiful, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Even here in Arles. When I woke, pale and sick, after my nervous sleep, I clutched for your picture in the air; I made sure it was graven in me. Your face, your inspired work . . . Claim her, Stéphane, I ordered myself. I tightened my muscles and now I speak. I love you, Simone, and be damned to all the others."

Simone was still worried. She loved his talk and bravura but she was still betrothed to Lolo. She whispered, "With you, perhaps, but I dare not . . ."

Stéphane spoke out, "Simone, don't play the coquette with me. What you say is so enticing and I am so direct. I have no defence. Not against you, Simone, none at all."

She spoke like a woman, not like a young actress. "I am impressed with your love, Stéphane. Rather I am impressed with you and I believe in your love. It is too soon, Stéphane. But let me hear you talk, it is a balm. I want to listen."

Simone fell back on the long-slung garden chair. She was weak. The scene at Les Saintes-Maries and a week of new emotions ending by a thundering demand to sweep out the past and take on obedient love, these three joined to break her. She looked done in.

"Simone, I don't want to tax you . . ."

She did not seem to hear. "Can I command such love? Let it be true."

He waited for her words but her face never changed and she did not move for a few moments. When she shook herself she was refreshed and told him of the scene at Les Saintes-Maries. As she told him the story with adjectives as warm as paints, he was moved less by the tragedy than by the brilliant picture.

"What a picture, Simone. Which one of us will paint it?"

He got out a crayon, took up paper lying on the garden table, and sketched the scene. She laughingly corrected it from her memories: the tragedy was being exorcised. As they drew, they discovered their communion. They turned to each other, he with broad smiles, she a bit ashamed of feeling such unity with an insistent lover on the basis of her broken romance with another. And with his brother? Bizarre, and was it—well, in order? She spoke of the wedding again to force it on her attention, shed some light tears, and then fell back. Her head drooped and swayed. She remained in the garden chair until twilight. Stéphane sketched by her side, but he neglected his canvas to picture the bride.

While she tried to push off sleep, her face was often distorted, pulled, suddenly became taut and annoyed; she cried, she whisked away some things from her as though they were flies. There were moments of sleep. Some immense history was going on that afternoon. Stéphane stopped sketching and either sat beside her, taking her hand, or walked about softly for those six hours. He wondered at the union of beauty, passion, talent. Was Onésime blind that he had not seized her? Or was it the grace of God to the stronger brother?

She woke up in sundown's chill. Stéphane wrapped her. He touched her shoulders. As he did, he felt glass shattering through his system, a silver sheet crumpled in him, he was electrically broken

up, maddened. He bent over to kiss her and as his lips touched he felt ill from excess of love. Twenty-six and his first true woman! Adult man, you heard the call so late and so much the stronger. Simone looked at him fantastically, she knew he had won.

"Show me the wedding sketch," she evaded.

"I tore it up. The only sketch I will finish is that of our wedding. We remember nothing, we expect everything. Hold to me, my hope."

Simone moved her hands before her face as though to clear the cobwebs. She was in a man's passions; she was central in his view. She would be carried on another's vessel; it was the repose she so much needed.

"Stéphane, you seem kind. You may once have been vicious, so you tell me. You, like me, must have had a blow, a shock. In you I see something of the man that shall love me forever. With that I shall see the earth renewed. My paintings you praise are nothing to what I shall then accomplish. Stéphane, bring me your paintings, some day, else I will talk too much. My words must not outrun my heart." She was still afraid and ran indoors.

He waited for several days, not that he was not sure that he had triumphed, for he knew that, but so as to make her surrender sweet to herself. One afternoon, when it was grey, he came with canvases slipping whichways out of his arms. Simone, still thoughtful and unconsenting, made him place them one after another on an easel. She motioned when she wanted to see another. Then she told him to come later and she sat brooding long, for she had her life to decide.

When he came back, she spoke the truth. "You're a genius, Stéphane, a real one. Why, I am poor compared to you." She bit her lip for she was mortified, but she was honest and falling in love. Her pride fled and she flung her arms about him. Stéphane thrilled at her love but he feared this outburst of praise. Passionate Simone, she might regret having overstepped boundaries. He was an untrained country painter. When they were quieter he spoke cautiously. That was after hours of unison.

"I am grateful. But after all, I am a man, experienced, and I'm not afraid to look facts in the face. I'm an amateur. Genius! I don't like such big words. My love, out of what could it come? It takes years for artists in Paris to learn the thousand secrets of colour and form—and you call me a genius. Aren't you a bit exalted? Mind you, when it comes to subject matter, I am with you. My mind

is stuffed with ideas. What I don't know is whether I can carry them out. I saw in Marseille the inferno of the modern world, capitalism, its criminal face. I—" He stopped short laughing. "God, what stopped me? I was just about to deliver a grand speech. Well, to be short, I dreaded business after what I went through. It left a scar in my heart. I went about with miserable circus performers when I was ruined. I took up the humble in my heart, then with my brush. And I said to myself, you were never made for business. A real capitalist loves that kind of fight. He comes back again for more money. It was my energy bubbling over into the wrong pool. But a genius! Out of what? Troubles? Who hasn't got them? Poverty? Most of us have that. Why?"

Simone looked at him powerfully. "You won't believe what I tell you until they dust your paintings in museums, until you are embalmed in a catalogue. Oh trust me to see you aright! I have fallen in love too quickly. I'm afraid of myself. I'm beginning to wonder if I'm not simply a grand alley cat. When I saw more of you and saw your work as well, I knew I had found my man. Oh let me make love to you."

She bent over and covered his large hands with a shower of kisses. He caught her up, but she put her hand over his ready lips. "I will soon be your girl. Your life will come from me and I will understand your work. My dear friend, I am in love, deep in love."

She walked away quickly into the house; she rushed back into herself. "It's not another illusion," she kept on instructing herself in a soft roundelay. "It's not just another lover." The words, "I am fallen into love," whirled in her temples, the refrain was love. She rejected each stanza as it came up and thought of her easy adventures of the past. She argued against herself: "I know him little." She reasoned: "He has said almost nothing." She attacked herself: "He is a cake stuffed with your own desires; it is you that fill him with sweets." Then she kissed her pillows like a young girl, held them and cried, "No, he has come at last, he is sincere, I know the truth."

The late evening. Stéphane was still waiting in the garden. A light shone from her room. She looked out, leaned over the little rose house, and called, "Stéphane, it is you?"

"Simone, dear. I waited your word."

"Go. I must see you to-morrow. To-night, I cannot."

She turned from the window, touched by the Furies, and spent the night painting. She hated the artificial light, the dead colours

given by yellow bulbs. Her paintings were confused as she felt tired, in the dark morning hours, but at dawn she painted nervously but concisely. As the sun rose higher her images became crystal-formed and crystal-clear, her colours warm, her strength grew, and she took nourishment from her powerful visions, so that she was refreshed.

The gardens of Arles were full of loquat trees. Under one, Stéphane painted until he could see Simone. He had not tried his prentice hand at tame landscapes, but now, when sweet-cherry, loquat, almond, cherry trees were bearing, the cultivated strawberry plants pushing out their great fruit, the wildwood strawberries at the forest fringe filled the air with their tender perfume, when ferns took on substance and their delicate smell offered battle to more vulgar flowers and, above all, when he was in love, he knew himself in a riot of opportunity. He whistled as he daubed, and ate sandwiches with wolfish speed. In the afternoon, he would haunt the Lamouroux home.

She was standing in a sweet-william bed when he came. They rushed at each other and covered their cheeks with kisses, quick, numerous, warm, happy, far from their intensity when they were straining at love. Now it was clean, full of sunshine, out of doubt; they had the fresh charm of nature's children. She scampered upstairs and brought down the two paintings that she had tricked that night. She turned them so that they could not be seen, kicked them about gaily, and threw them over the hedge, torn. She whirled Stéphane about, he held her, and they danced like backslapping bumpkins: he who came to her in gloom, she to him in tragedy.

*A Modernist Squares the Circle*

CÉCILE RENOUVIER lorded it over the mansion, the cellars, the warehouses. No foreman denied her calmly assumed authority. Only the railway agent wrote to Marseille informing Lévy-Ruhlmann of the young lady's doings. Lévy-Ruhlmann did not trouble himself. The old Denys had let down the business at Béziers while, for the first time, he sought pleasure and business outside his native city. Let the staff at Béziers feel they were under family supervision. Her position could be upset at will. The milliardaire smiled at the enterprising young lady; he wished his own daughters were less ornamental.

In the mansion Cécile rearranged the furnishings along civilized lines. Poor Louis XIV went out accompanied by his stuffed mistresses, the squat chairs; Louis XV followed him to a gilded basement; Louis XVI, in classic simplicity, lost his head at an antiquarian's; the Directors were hustled out of their corrupt niches; the Jacob style with all its Napoleonic plush pretence and fine heavy woods took a Waterloo nose dive. The Louis-Philippe hoarder's wardrobes were sold as junk. The *art nouveau* chandeliers, the "cute" dogs that served as ash trays: these went to the poor. It was the last vengeance of the rich.

Bouguereau and Cabanel, Gérôme and Lhermitte, were sent to decorate Algerian bar-rooms. The total receipts were 400,000 francs. These receipts Cécile reinvested in steel-framed furniture. Everything in the house was metal or leather, at any rate, could be kept perfectly clean in that hot climate. Modigliani and Derain took the place of the fleshy nudes (the human race stopped eating in paintings about 1890); hungry mugs decorated the walls. Cécile worked tirelessly to make sure that the house was absolutely up to snuff and that it would be completely dated by 1940. She had a grand time. If she could not have love, at least she would have zip. That was how she expressed it, for by now her French had become clipped, monosyllabic, slangy.

Into this paradise of executive ability, there rolled a Talbot limousine containing François, the unpleasant, and his lady Adèle, the pale and proper. Firmin met him at the door. He was Cécile's champion, François's enemy. François cast his eye up and down the house; it was terrifying. The heirlooms were missing, removed without the parents' consent! The house looked like the interior decorators' show windows on the Champs-Élysées.

He rushed into the waiting-room, where Cécile sat at an open steel-and-glass desk.

"Oh hello, François, how do you like the dump?" she chirped.

"Dump, apache slang! Dump for our family home! What have you done with it, how much has it cost?"

"Profit, 33,000 francs on the whole operation, deposited to Papa's credit in the Société Générale. I'll show you the accounts. God knows who bought the rubbish from us. It must have been a psychic cousin of yours, my dear brother."

"Cécile, this is absurd. I am no enemy of modern art, I have always hated the nineteenth century." He drew himself up as if he saluted this permanent formula. "But look at the impression it makes! The Renouviers, the most solid folk in Béziers! Now we look like a pack of Bourse parvenus in that Neuilly district in Paris. Solidity has been Papa's big asset and don't you forget it."

"Solidity and neglect of his business," said Cécile. "I have checked on the leaks here in the household, on the leaks and graft and treason in the business, and I have saved, I think, at the rate of 300,000 francs yearly. And do you know what salary I have voted myself? Plenty, 100,000 francs a year and keep, all free of taxes. Better congratulate me, François, also the family, for now it has a future."

"It has a splendid enough future through its affiliation with Lévy-Ruhmann. It needs no child like you. And I don't trust you, Cécile. I've never forgotten your lie at that hearing."

"So?"

"Don't be saucy, Cécile, the family pardoned your impertinence when you were a child; it is dangerous now. I am the head of the family and I insist you give up this girl's whim of managing the properties."

"I thought Papa was the head of the family?"

"Not now, I have news for you. Papa has appointed his three sons his powers of attorney, and I also hold the procuration for the



interests of my father-in-law. Papa wants to retire and merely receive an income. So you see, you are compelled to obey me."

"Not that I doubt your word, my dear brother, but an arrangement in which my equal rights are denied interests me. Out of curiosity if nothing else, can I see it?"

"I have the document with me. Luckily, I had brought it to be registered here in the stamp office. Read it carefully." He took out of his capacious coat pocket the precious document, written in forty pages with a perfect clerk's script, covered with attestations, but not as yet stamped.

"I presume it must be stamped in Hérault, as the register of commerce of the business is here; it is domiciled here."

"Exactly, my little sister. That was why I returned from Cannes. It is delightful there. We did not wish to leave, did we, Adèle?"

Adèle of the inexpressive countenance got some expression. "No, my dear François, no, there's a fine class of people there; Béziers is so provincial. Really, one stifles here."

"Then choke some more," Cécile countered, "for here goes." She took the power of attorney and threw it into the hearth. François looked at her, prepared to strike, but she got out a sharp paper knife. François sneered.

"You have accomplished nothing; it can easily be made out again and then registered. You forget you are dealing with a doctor of laws. Not that you respect intelligence or honour either, for that matter. Let's go, Adèle. We shall tell the family of what goes on here, renew our power of attorney, and register it, and then you must go, Cécile. You left the family at your whim, now you can leave it at theirs."

Adèle wheezed. "You are most unpleasant, Cécile. But for a girl who has abandoned virginity, anything is possible."

"Haven't you abandoned virginity, too?" Cécile inquired. "Or is François impotent in body as in mind?"

"Mademoiselle," she commanded, "please to remember that we are married, and that you have given yourself."

"Madame," Cécile replied, "please to remember that you are the daughter of a wholesaler. He sells your favours in a job lot for a lifetime. It works out cheap per unit. I am more sympathetic to the ladies that sell their love by the unit but, of course, their overhead per act of love is rather high. That's why they die in the gutter."

François knew he was no match in wit for his sister. He could not abuse and strike forever, he would become absurd. He took Adèle by the hand and left, banging the door.

Within one minute Cécile telephoned M. Pressard-Monod to issue an injunction against any power of attorney that excluded Gisèle and herself, for that would endanger their equity in the estate. "*Mon maître*," she counselled, "make sure that if a power is issued we have the right to recover from the attorneys for any mismanagement and impairment of the hereditary value of our estates."

M. Pressard-Monod was delighted. "Mlle Cécile, you have the decision of a man without his animal slowness. I must learn women all over again. You are a tonic for a coffin prospect."

"M. Pressard-Monod, there is one coffin prospect we must work on first and that is Lévy-Ruhmann who is trying to steal this business. But he won't. Papa is flattered. He thinks that a power of attorney is safe because it is given to his sons. He wants to leave active business. But a family power of attorney, although it leaves me in a minority of one, is a bar to his schemes. Gisèle will defend herself, too, ultimately, even against her husband. You are of that opinion, *Maître*?"

"Entirely. Depend on me. I haven't had enough cases that stir my bile, I am declining. Now malice will preserve my days. For a lawyer who has taken his nourishment for sixty years out of controversy to be counsel to a spitfire, what a climax!"

"I am glad. That work at Banyuls among patient scientists made me a different girl. I now look upon myself as the man of the family. Papa's a grand fossil, Mother a *poseuse*, my two brothers, Foulques and Jacques, really girls in disguise, Gisèle, sold out to the enemy's son, and foolish François, married to the enemy's harpy. No, the young Denys Renouvier survives only in me. I have a family to keep."

When the telephone conversation was over, she went down to the *couturière* and ordered herself three Schiaparelli costumes, with the *outré* inspirations that made that designer the rage. A glorious day was capped.

"I couldn't stand anything as well ordered as Lanvin, Patou or Lelong after that row," she reflected.

For the first time in years the *boulevardiers* on the Allées Paul-Riquet saw the Renouvier girl giggling as of old. It was Cécile, the city's madcap back again. Despite François's forebodings, the

Renouvier family stock went up. The wine dealers, gossiping after market hours, looked at her and said simply, "God, their business must be booming. She sounds like old times again. She's not a girl, she is a barber, a discount shaver. I know by sad experience. Think Lévy-Ruhlmann will take them over?"

"Not with that girl about. She is the Portia of that Israelite. He'll be working for her soon, making gold bricks without straw."

"What became of Onésime?"

"*Jésus*, there he goes."

The wine dealers turned; Onésime took off his hat. They all took off theirs and their gaze followed him until he disappeared in the direction of the Plateau of the Poets. "He's going to the Renouviers', something is up." The crutches moved their curiosity too, although he hobbled gaily, swung widely, and went fast.

Firmin was delighted to see him. "The young master François was here to-day; now we see you. This house is human again. But, Monsieur, I am sorry. What has happened to you?"

"I will explain later. Is the family at home? I would like to find Mlle Cécile and also my mother and get news of Stéphane."

"Mlle Cécile is upstairs now. I will ask if she will receive you."

"Tell her if I am unwelcome to be frank."

"I dare not speak in that manner. I shall put it as nearly as possible."

Firmin came down to announce that all was well, when Cécile flew down the staircase and passed him.

"Onésime, on crutches? Onésime, I thought I would scold you but no, are you hurt badly? Tell me, are you hurt badly? Tell me."

"No, Cécile, in several weeks these crutches can be forgotten. In several months I will be entirely healed."

"Then you're not a cripple. Fearful beggar, I was about to throw a few sous to a faithless lover. Now I can abuse you as you deserve."

She tenderly took Onésime who, she feared, might take this raillery seriously, and escorted him into the living-room. He looked about at the unfamiliar furnishings; Cécile prattled on.

"That's all right, Onésime, I changed it myself. My parents have become members of international high society or something, so I am watching the centimes in dear old Béziers. Tell me your stories. Lies, I know, but I want to hear them. How many hearts

have you broken, or how much gall of yours have the girls spilled? I will tell you mine. I have outdistanced Messalina, Faustina, whom you will. Good story? Well it's a joy to see you, Onésime. Tell me everything."

She spoke at a mile a minute. Onésime laughed heartily, the first really good, belly-originating laugh he had had in so long. The shock of the church scene at Les Saintes-Maries still fatigued him; it was good to feel joy.

He told her everything, why he left her, Marseille, the flight of Stéphane, a mad girl, Simone, Lolo, the broken wedding, the bullfight.

He told it as though he were a dry-as-dust historian telling of the extinct passions of Roman statesmen, in yellow-paged libraries. No justification, no heightening of his role, no attempt to make an ordered narrative, no attempt even to extract a moral about his indecision or about the absence of significance in his zigzag story. Cécile told hers with more verve, but not more colour, a bit heightened, a little more unified, but still illuminating.

"So, Onésime, you were right. You jumped, I was forced back on myself. I have made myself independent. If you stayed you would have been a hanger-on of our blessed money. You have been through adventures that seemed futile, disordered, but they will profit you, I know." She was fishing for him to say something near, loving.

He slowly gathered a nosegay of moral lessons. "I didn't think so until Les Saintes-Maries. I did that to save a woman whose life had partly been mine. I still feel responsible to a former beloved. When love is dead, well, I can't think it should leave no trace. That would be, uh, uh, promiscuous. Cécile, I'm afraid I'm a Huguenot after all." His voice became loud and clear. "At Les Saintes-Maries I saw I was capable of decision. So I came to you." Cécile felt better. She was still faithful, the pert thing. He added, "Cécile, I am not an artist. I despised old Lamouroux when he said I had a head for business but that there wasn't an ounce of art in me."

Onésime said no more for he was tired. Cécile kept him in the sun parlour like a greenhouse plant. As he improved, they sat next to the fantastic fountain, overloaded with ornament, in the Plateau of the Poets. A Titan played with a terrestrial globe while he looked over the vineyards to the sea. Here Cécile and Onésime had played years before, rolling hoops and balancing diablo. They

sat, hand in hand, and saw their successors play, but this time in toy cars and scooters.

The miserably moulded busts of Languedoc poets winked in the sun. Animals in the miniature zoo howled. Fashionably dressed young matrons, pigeon-proud with recent sexual indulgence, wheeled low-slung baby carriages with ball-bearing wheels and baby-blue ribbons across embroidered pillowcases. The two said nothing. They were finding the levels of their love. Onésime, cured in body and soul, still did not feel that Cécile was in love with him as in that night in the marsh. But they would be married and quite happy. He was sure he would equal her in energy, rival her in verve, surpass her in strength, even if always less gay. As his confidence gained with recovery, Cécile found in him the peace she required after the discipline at Banyuls.

They had gone round the clock and the hands were together again, only now it was noon, not midnight.

*The Strike*

THE sardine-and-tuna fishing fleet lay still in the outer harbour of Sète. Every boat flew French flags and red flags at half-mast. From one end to the other they were decked with black streamers. Black baize was draped over the bows, the hammer and sickle or the three arrows, according to political faith, on a red cloth, over the sterns. The harbour itself, sad beyond belief, its white houses neglected, slipping into the quays, was a mass of black and red streamers. The deputy had died, tribune of his people. A working man, both fisher boy and field labourer, this simple deputy, was gone.

Sète is the city of Our Lady of Poverty. Its marine cemetery may inspire its elegant son, Paul Valéry, to indite polished elegiac verses, but his abstract soul has no fellow in this town. For it is the city of those that wear shoddy clothing, large cloth caps; its women wear slovenly made cotton stockings; French chic is unknown. It is an artificial port, given over to petroleum and wine, fisheries and fertilizers, shipbuilding and spirits. The rich merchants, almost to a man, motor, when their shops or offices are closed, to the exquisite suburbs of Montpellier. They try to forget the town they use all day.

The main street boasts no fine shop. The side streets might not be better than the purlieus of Singapore; certainly they are more drab. But there is a vitality in this sad city. Its young men love to play at water jousts and they are first among Frenchmen for prowess in football. Unable to spend, they play.

Along the quays are strung poor restaurants with magniloquent inscriptions, an avenue of boasting. Their fish cuisine, is, in despite, distinguished. Only on Sundays do they do a decent business.

Seen from the colossal jetty that separates the Mediterranean from the outer harbour, the city, climbing up the sides of the Mont Saint-Clair, crowned by massive, ugly fortresses, a winding dusty limestone hillside road along its sharp incline, with a mournful but impressive Grand Canal in its centre, Sète is a proletarian Venice.

It is not animated, yet it is active, and, in some parts noisy. The people would be animated if they ate more: they eat just a little too little. The girls try to be gay: they could do with a bit more flesh. The houses try to look clean: they need just a bit of paint. Melancholy Sète falls just short. She has the charm of wide-awake poverty. Yet she has been a capitalist's paradise. Fastest growing port in France, she has coined money for ungrateful capitalists.

The Renouvier docks were the largest in town. Their workers had covered the façade of their warehouse with pictures of the dead deputy, of Blanqui and Marx. The protesting foreman had telephoned Béziers but the office was closed, and so he had to let the workers mourn their own in their way.

The trade-union groupings gathered at the station to receive the urn. Their deputy had died in Paris and been cremated in that mosquelike kiln at Père-Lachaise. He had left instructions that his ashes were to be scattered in the sea "like Friedrich Engels."

The *Auguste Blanqui*, queen of the fishing fleet, was given the urn. The boat was owned by the Fishermen's Co-operative. By the time the poor fishers had paid for it, it had become antiquated. But it was a proper object of devotion. It sailed out alone. From the jetty, thousands of Sétos looked out to sea. Their eyes were accustomed to distance and there were few spyglasses. The *Auguste Blanqui* lay on the horizon. The sea was choppy, the sky overcast. The urn was emptied and the ashes placed on a red flag, and then a committee of the late deputy's comrades sifted the ashes slowly into the sea. There he had worked and there he was fused.

As the wind carried off the ashes, the watchers on the jetty cried out and so the flags of the freighters and fishing boats were dipped in farewell. The Italian tramp *Cola di Rienzi* passed the returning funeral boat and the sailors showed respect in the western manner, despite the orders of the officers.

The deputy was gone. Of the socialist persuasion, he had nevertheless been zealous for unity, especially among the trade unions. The solidarity of the workers was at its height as the *Auguste Blanqui* returned to port. Touched by a common sorrow they were ready for a common action. Comrade Monderoy (the bald-headed unattractive man Cécile had heard at Port-Vendres) mounted the improvised tribune on the drawbridge overlooking the Grand Canal. His words were straightforward:

"Fellow workers. I say plainly that I profit by the death of our

idol to make you aware that what he stood for is now your responsibility. To-night you are moved by his death, so to-night I hope to move you towards a new life.

"Why are your wages so low, fishermen? You are unionized. Yet the pressure of unorganized *gavaches*, poor herded slaves from the mountains, so cheapens farm labour for months every year, that the capitalists have their dearest wish, a permanent supply of surplus labour power ready to sell itself for a loaf of bread and a bribe of wine.

"Until now, your haughty skilled wine-growers union has repulsed the organization of fellow human beings whom they call 'savages.' In this way their wages are lowered, and your wages, dockers, fishers, warehouse workers, are lowered. This reservoir of scabs must be drained into trade-union channels. Once the *gavaches* are unionized, the wages of labour in these departments can be raised to that prevailing in the Paris district.

"I ask you to remember our beloved deputy, not by tears, for in tears we have been bathed for centuries and it has not washed away the filth of poverty. Remember him with the clenched fist, unity against the large employers, unionization of all labour, casual included. I could use more beautiful language but it would bake no bread."

The moment was perfectly chosen. The wrangles and counsels of prudence that divided the unions were impossible at this solemn movement and so the dramatic circumstance answered all objections. Within a few weeks the agents of the Fishermen's Union among many others, descended like locusts on the hordes of migratory workers. Patiently they explained to this childlike folk that if they were grouped they could force better terms from the *padrones*. The prefect sent the *Garde républicaine* to break up the meetings. They came on their superb horses, flaunted their Roman helmets, flashed swords, and broke up the public meetings, but were helpless against the cells. Every police chief vied with the other in arranging baton charges against the organizers. For the life of rich men in the region turned about the exploitation of the *gavaches*. This "beautiful ethnological custom," "this heritage of the Roman rites of Bacchus," this "expression of folk fantasy," was the lifeblood of profit. So that even rural guards were ordered to divert their attention from forest fires to human fires.

Not only were the army, the *Garde républicaine*, the *gendarmerie*,



constabulary, police and rural guards ordered to drench the flames of labour revolt, but the journalists were soon rounded up. This was a life-and-death business for all concerned, they explained. Why was wine drunk at all? Because it was cheap. Why was it cheap? Because of the *gavaches*. What would happen if they got good wages? It would be dear. What then? The consumer would prefer cheaper beer. And then? The once fertile South of France would become a poor sister of the Sahara.

The forces gathered on both sides. The chamber of commerce of Marseille and of Toulon, alarmed, sent 50,000 francs to the prefect, "to enforce order." The overweening glove-mill proprietors of the antiquated factories at Saint-Affrique and Millau, in the Gorge of the Tarn, sent another 100,000 francs. If the *gavaches* received decent wages in the wine plain, they would not work for pauper wages in the feudal glove-making towns. The cap-making capitalists of Alès, the cloth-weaving masters of Carcassonne, the delicatessen craftsmen of Castelnaudary, all defended the common basis of cheap labour. Threats were made of importing still cheaper labour, Catalan, perhaps Murcian, perhaps even Moroccan. With joy, the Employers' Syndicate of Hérault arranged, through the Ministry of Labour at Paris, to send down two thousand slaves from Piedmont, ordered there by the Fascist Labour Council of Turin. *The Internationale* was sung by both parties, by the employers with a sour pitch, by the workers with vigorous strophes.

There were 80,000 *gavaches* in the wine lands of lower Languedoc. All bets were off. The *Félibrige*, the organization of poetic folks that wished to preserve Provençal speech and manners, recited rhymes to the tattoo of the policeman's baton. The *Jeux floraux*, the Floral Games, where the South delights in giving prizes shaped like cyclamen and anemone, hyacinth and heliotrope, forgot their anodyne subjects of competition; the prize theme this year was "French Unity." The class struggle, that surgeon's knife, cut through the physiological mess of society, tore its ligaments of speech and legend, colour and song, and revealed the gangrene.

The largest buyer of casual labour was Denys Renouvier et Fils. It employed seven thousand *gavaches* directly, and bought from growers who used five thousand more. If Renouvier surrendered, the strike would be won, if Renouvier held out, the union funds would soon give out. The migratory mountaineers, unaccustomed to organization, wanting their bit of wine, of "life," dreading to go back to the

mountains without the sunshine of alcohol, would soon leave the Marxist charmers, and offer themselves in degradation to the Bacchic thieves.

At Marseille, Lévy-Ruhlmann counselled Denys to allow Cécile to play the first negotiation. "She is a Lady Bountiful and might do better than either of us. They trust her."

Cécile was for ceding to the unions, mostly on wage rates, but still she could not understand the need for permanent unions among the *gavaches*. "But the objects of your unions, Messieurs, are good wages, shorter hours, and better conditions. If these objects are attained, what is the need of your further organization? After all they are only seasonal help. I am willing to grant you generous terms. Come, come, Messieurs, I am a trader. You have made an excellent bargain, profit by it. I beg you to note also, that alone among all the large employers, we have not employed thugs, scabs, nor contributed to repression."

"You are cleverer than the others," said Comrade Monderoy. "You prepare a liberal window display with which to sell us shoddy goods. No, Mlle Renouvier, there is no trading on that basis."

"Nor on any other." That voice came from the corridor. It was the commanding, cheery tone of Denys Renouvier, just arrived, recalled to active business by frantic telegrams from his fellow capitalists in the Hérault. Behind him were three sons, daughter, daughter-in-law, wife. Reinforcements came up for the humane struggle. In the corner Cécile noticed the Mephisto of the business, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann.

The fleet of Rolls-Royces, Mercedes, Hispanos, Minervas, Bentleys, Voisins and Cunninghams outside tooted in carnival noise for gangway along the Avenue du Président-Wilson. Their drivers pushed aside the broken-down Citroëns, Rosengarts and Amilcars of the Sète committee of workers' delegates.

"Sorry," fired away 'good old Renouvier,' "sorry, boys. This young lady had no authority to talk to you. It is with me you must deal and let me tell you, I don't deal. I don't want a single professional agitator about here. They stink. Stirring up the happiest people in the world, the sons of the vineyards. It's a crime, a dirty crime. This is my business, whatever anyone thinks. I warn you to get out of the Hérault. I won't look at the cross-eyes of Moscow. Who asked you into this house, my house, anyway? Who?

Firmin," he yelled for the butler, "who told you to admit these strangers?"

"Mlle Cécile and M. Onésime, Monsieur, begging pardon."

"Onésime! A Sabatier in this house! Throw him out, Firmin, you hear me. After that, disinfect the place. Hello, what's this?" He looked about the salon, suddenly perceiving after ten minutes' howling that it was utterly changed. "Where are the pictures? My Cabanel, my Bouguereau? They were worth millions, millions." He wrung his hands and was by now hysterical with fast accumulating postures. He looked at the new gallery, a hungry Jewish beggar in blue, by Picasso, a hungry tubercular mother, a charcoal sketch of Käthe Kollwitz and a lithograph of miners by Steinlen. Nothing in the house was recognizable.

He went gaping through the rooms as the family and committee waited. It was not his old club any more. He felt like an Anglo-Indian colonel who has lost his tigerskin on the wall and seen it replaced by a model drawing of an American automatic tool.

"That damned daub artist, Onésime, is the cause of all this," he declaimed, wholly ignoring the trade-union committee.

"No, Papa, I did it before Onésime came back. The house is changed from top to bottom."

"For heaven's sake, why? Isn't anyone jolly any more? Here I used to run my business alone for twenty years. I laughed. I never knew a gloomy day, no, not one. I ran my business as I pleased, that's why. The *gavaches* sang and drank deep and I had pictures with some flesh on my walls. What the devil is up now? Messieurs," he turned to the workers' group, "I have a warehouse with business offices. You have no place in this house. Go!"

"Just a moment, M. Renouvier," spoke up a little man well known to him, a small wine planter. "I represent a group of independent small growers and we are backing the workers. We cannot live on the low prices we get for our crop, because of the cheapness with which the big growers like you are enabled to produce, because you pay the workers so little. We are becoming paupers. M. Renouvier, do not ruin the lower middle class, they are France's backbone."

"I told you all to go and now I get another speech. So it's you, Marjevols. If you spent as much time in studying fertilizers as politics you'd be another Denys Renouvier. Come, come, Marjevols, you are not like this collection of troublemakers. I'll talk things over with you in the Café de la Comédie, later. Go, go, all of you."

The sad committee that had insisted on forcing the pliant Cécile to more exacting terms regretted their strategy. They left for Sète for another conference. They knew how large were the daily losses of the Renouviers and felt the old plutocrat's paroxysms would cease, cured by the red ink in his ledgers. But they had to be prepared for a long fight. The presence of Lévy-Ruhlmann meant outside backing for the local capitalists.

Old Denys ran through the house, red-faced, puffing, stopping for breath, but compelled to go through from cellar to attic. François told him nothing of the new furniture; he thought the shock to Denys would hurt Cécile more than tale-bearing. Despite Denys's honest rage, he also knew from the casinos he had visited at Cannes and Juan-les-Pins that this decoration was ultra-chic. He was not as displeased as he pretended. Cécile sensed the moment. She said:

"I transformed the house at a profit of 33,000 francs."

"Eh, 33,000, well that puts a different colour on things. I was in too much of a hurry. That boob, Onésime, could never have done such a slick job of it. I knew it was my hummingbird, my Cécile." He looked at her afresh, astonished. "Oh, by God, you're back! Why, you were away a long time. I clean forgot. Gadding about myself, old fool. Come to my arms." And the big red-cheeked man lavished kisses on his favourite child. So did the clan, except Lévy-Ruhlmann. He shook hands with the pressure of soft water.

Cécile called her father into his private room. Patiently she exhibited the accounts of the Béziers business and household. He was appreciative, his eyes glistened. He kissed her again, he said, a kiss for every ten thousand francs she saved. "My dear, you are my only child. If I were not sure of Mother's fidelity, I would assume my other children were fathered by thin-blooded dwarfs or dull commercial travellers." He chuckled, he felt generous once more.

But his joys were short-lived. M. Pressard-Monod called, waving an injunction against Denys's delegating powers exclusively to his sons. Who should come into the room but Lévy-Ruhlmann. He twitted Denys with being a laughing-stock by letting a "capricious child" run his business. Somehow Denys did not warm up to the altruistic Marseille Talmudist. Then the three sons entered. François clamoured, Jacques and Foulques cried for pocket money required for Paris sports, tennis, eating, beds. Mamma pressed

the claims of her darling boys. Onésime appeared and was booted out. The chorus of claim and counterclaim rose around its fat centre. A messenger from the labour unions appeared with revised demands. The chorus consisted of one mezzo, one dramatic soprano, one lyric soprano, one croak (stork), one croak (raven), one tenor, one baritone, two basses, one refrain—*money*.

The babel nearly killed Denys but he rose from the frog's swamp like a potent log and issued suddenly *pronunciamientos* with the fervour of a Spanish general in the qualms of high treason. "Shut up, everyone. My Cécile has made money, it has determined me. You first, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. We are colleagues and relatives but I hold control of my business and always will, by God. François, listen to me and not to that old bird. All five children share and share alike in power of attorney, majority vote goes. Minority can sue for breach of trust. Cécile, marry that damned Onésime if you want to. No dowry. Not a sou. Only furniture. Your kind; full of corners. To the workers' committee—damn them—fifteen per cent wage increase, sixty-hour week for casual labour. Union recognition only for permanent workers. I'm sick of it all, take it or leave it, and go to Hell. I'll get a stroke if I hear more noise. I have set my house in order," he finished in grand style, as though they all had agreed.

And he got away with nearly the whole of his Morse-code programme. He was still in control and the children obeyed and did not even dare complain. Cécile got one concession. If she married, both Onésime and she would remain in the business but at the salary she had voted for herself alone. Granted. "No more arguments," said the tired old man. The battle with the unions ended in the usual manner of an opening engagement. Wages were raised by sixteen per cent, a fifty-six-hour week for casual workers, union recognition for permanent workers only, and *prud'homme* status (labour-council right) to the *gavaches*. The Sète committee gained some ground, some prestige, but failed in its major objective. Still the partial surrender of the Renouvier house forced the other members of the syndicate to follow suit. The workers were happy enough to stage a torchlight procession. Fireworks and wine marked their first partial victory.

Denys Renouvier was tried by these troubles. He fanned himself to reduce the flushes from high blood pressure. The whirl of hatred put the choleric Denys to bed.

But the house of Lévy-Ruhlmann realized that there were determined enemies in the other tribe and that empire over its tents and accoutrements was not yet sure. The millionaire looked sadly at Onésime and realized that the Huguenot is as tough as an oak tree. He knew he must call up a tornado by his spells if he wished to uproot one. He consoled himself by thinking of that old joke about the opera of Meyerbeer, *The Huguenots*, that in it Catholics and Protestants killed each other and a Jew wrote the music. He hummed the air of the swords and so recovered his confidence.

*A Perfect Love Affair*

HIGH-GROWN horse-chestnut trees sported their pink tufted pyramids. True chestnut trees spread their shade wide and the planes acted as the humble road adjutants of the more august elms in sentinel duty on the streets of Arles, asleep under the uncontested supremacy of the sun. From the cathedral of St. Trophime to the Roman theatre, the place was burned by the noonday star, by the reflection thrown off the masterly church porch, by the radiation of the broken columns of the fragmented theatre. The asphalt pavement eagerly sought to return to its first state, liquid pitch. No one dared move outside tree shadows. Even there, to saunter required nearly as much endurance as running. It was laziness in state. Queen Siesta wooed her subjects into an appropriate drowsiness and then fell asleep herself.

The goatherd slept beside his indifferent flock, the goatherd's boy played the piccolo but he practised only the wild scales of heat. Horses were tormented by flies but they would not flick their tails. Mosquitoes hovered philosophically. Their females required blood in full, fat supply, but were too lazy to pierce. Caterpillars, though, showed unusual activity and ambled across roads, their horns amain, all for reasons known only to caterpillars. Scores of snoozing dogs harboured fleas gently. There was no speed in creation, neither of muscle nor movement; it took osmosis and perspiration to cleanse still life.

One man, seated on a street bench, worked in this heat. It was the painter, Stéphane Sabatier. He was focusing the portal of St. Trophime. His every fibre revolted against the impressionist church portals of Claude Monet. He felt that no one truly saw a sculptured population since Monet had "dodged" the issue. To him the rich, abundant, detailed images and decorative patterns on a cathedral arch required an equivalence in paint of their definiteness in stone. How to combine the plasticity inherent in paint with the quality given by stone as a medium was not yet resolved. Four

times he had failed gloriously. His effects were either confused, or too intellectually conceived, or the multiplicity of figures shared light in the wrong proportions, or the relation of their shadows was too definite. Stéphane was on his fifth attempt of this torrid fortnight. He was not doing better for he was reeling from the sun.

Simone was not painting that afternoon. Her father had an unusually large shipment to make. The United States had legalized alcohol and there was a temporary demand for Avignon wines. She was gay as she checked the shipments, her canary-coloured handkerchief about her hair. She called to the freight handlers, yoo-hoed to the locomotive crew. She was born for the heat. At a hundred degrees she was splendid, at ninety, merely pleasant, at seventy, slightly chill. So she was brisk and busy when all about her drooped. As soon as skies greyed, her disposition altered and she was less confident of her abilities. She identified her genius with the tint of deep blue.

She came after the implacable painter of cathedral portals. She embarrassed him by smothering him in kisses in full view of the lazy hangers-on. But everyone had seen her with several young men and the tale of Lolo was still smoking hot gossip. His family, it was said, held the escapade in mortal dread. It was never mentioned in the rustic cabin of the Priaulx.

Simone Lamouroux's love affairs were so numerous and so rich while they lasted that this one provoked little curiosity and less excitement. A drowsy comment or tired quip, a threadbare criticism, were the most it brought forth.

"Simone," Stéphane drawled, "the heat at Arles has beaten me. If I stay here any longer you shall have no lover but a bleached skeleton, kindly preserved in some borax or nitrate desert. I will be hard to love for my dried ribbons of flesh will make me look like a rag doll tied tight by a miser saving string. Would you love me so dry? Don't you prefer this heart of gold set afloat amid the blood, lymph and water of a lively fellow? If so, let's fly to where it is cool."

"Stéphane, my heart is wax. It is easily impressed and easily burned!"

He had been looking down on the ground as she spoke. He was making the usual inscription in the sandy earth, "*Je t'aime follement*," with criss-crossed hearts pierced by an arrow.



Simone tried to look into his face as he spoke, but he was addressing the spirit of the earth, apparently. She got up and cut on the chestnut tree: STÉPHANE ET SIMONE, LE 3 AÔUT 1933. Stéphane seemed troubled.

"You are too fleeting in your thoughts, my love. Life to me is solid. It is like the Canigou, that absolutely beautiful mountain block, that solitary peak, ten thousand feet high, geometrically perfect as a pyramid, astounding."

"Good painter's talk," said Simone.

"Let me go on till I speak my heart," he ordered her. "At its base are olive trees, then hardy plants that grow on plateaux, mountain wheat and thistles come up to four thousand feet, they stop and a band of pine trees, of other evergreens, keeps on to seven thousand feet, then come the occasional flowers of the upper mountains, the type of edelweiss. So the pyramid stands near the sea, and the delighted observer can witness on it, in exquisitely balanced zones, the forms of plant life perfectly adapted to each level. It's the same with us.

"Each of us breathes a different air; some of us thick, dark and long-lived, slow-growing too, like the olive tree, others who refuse to acknowledge winter like the evergreen, others hardy and good for a short crop like mountain wheat, others breathing a rare air to produce a thin but exquisite flower, as does a sonneteer. Each of us dies, yet the species goes on. But the mountain, the placid mountain, that is always there."

"It is true," echoed Simone. "When I paint, I say 'Simone Lamouroux, your face is much like a million others, and your life like all the living and a hundred billion dead in touch, sight, and so on. Don't be drunk with your own vision. It must be more like that of others than you care to believe.'"

Stéphane chanted, "As pine tree to pine tree, as ibex to ibex. The word *species* is our warning, it keeps us from the eccentric, it acknowledges orbits. Does a comet flame less for its fated cycle? Does our love burn less, dear, that we are like a multitude?"

"No, not less intense for that reason, for any reason, for none," she caught up fervently.

"Simone, let's go into the theatre, there is shade in the orchestra." He led her across the still white-hot Rue du Cloître towards the battered monument in which Roman provincial actors had been guyed by sybarites from the metropolis. In spite of Plautus, they were men; everything human was alien to them.

Stéphane was spurred by the spate of images and Simone had just begun the day. For her, as with office clerks in large cities, life began when her chores were done at her father's. Simone had played in the ruins of the Roman theatre since she was in pinafores. It was her home of make-believe, and it was make-believe itself. There were left standing only a lateral gate, two columns, Corinthian, with florid capitals boasting their now pockmarked acanthuses, a proscenium, some marble seats, marble paving, a few sorry arcades. It was not the ghost of a theatre, it was its reminiscence. A lover of the dead could project a sometime audience of sixteen thousand only if the guide books told him so.

An audience of one sufficed Simone. She recited solemnly some poems in which a girl reminds a lover that her body needs more than words and kisses. She danced and beckoned to Stéphane as she recited.

He responded, "Meet me in the Promenade of the Trench at ten in the night. It will be cool. The night is ours." She heard his order and agreed. They were to meet in the walk made out of the moat of the once high fortifications. It was Arles's trysting place; that is to say, its most crowded point. She walked home happy. The quarter-moon was up. It was watery. This might be the last chance of an evening together in the open, for many a day. The heavens had growled a bit at sundown after the furnace-fed day.

She hummed the improvised chant in the theatre, she the Aeolian harp, played by passion's winds; he the chromatic harp fashioning tunes by cunning. Yet their telepathy was more sure than silence's unisons.

For him, that night, she put on the *Arlésienne* costume. The former dress with its flat hat and flounced sleeves had gone out, but the ornate yet sober local dress persisted for gala occasions. She dressed in deep black. Her fichu of white tulle opened wide at her soft neck, so that her throat seemed ready for sweet song. Over her head, she put on a wide, long, black ribbon, carrying with it the lace band, draped over the shoulders, used only by the elegant ladies of Arles. Her ebony hair, her living glance, velvet despite its vividness, her affirmed paleness, were asserted by the local dress. She had not worn it for five years. It made her look much older than her years.

She stepped out in the Promenade, acknowledged the city beaux,

and met the hostile look of their escorts, then waited. Stéphane came late, breathless. They passed out of the collective hive of love-making to the Aliscamps where the poplar trees seemed thinner than ever by reason of the watery moon. She was calm, and spoke to him with that refinement of accent common to her town, the softest in Provence. Whenever Simone abandoned French for her native *langue d'oc* and softened it still further in the satin manner of Arles, it meant she had suspended ambition and put a curb to strivings.

She felt proud, too, of walking in her native costume with a lover from another town. They got into the cloisters. Crusaders haunted them in the Gothic galleries; they kissed as though impaled on a Maltese cross. Troubadours watched them in the Romanesque galleries. There, their embraces dropped off as in a slothful Alexandrine. The sculptured figures at every corner were not stone indifferent. They seemed happy to hear the kiss of the full-bodied instead of mumblings over missals. But a frieze does not smile so the couple moved out into the market place.

The obelisk cast a shadow across the deserted square. Stéphane liked it too much. "Cleopatra's needle, how envious I am. Forever at attention and never wavering despite all her wanton demands."

"Because it never satisfied them."

They looked at each other and made the compact that he had foreshadowed, "The night is ours."

They walked over the Trinquetaille Bridge over the raging Rhône. The watery moon became clear and the night soft and warm. Their adventure was not merely prompted by the day's heat and love, it was commanded by the change of weather. "There is a road that leads to the fields," Simone said.

The hayricks saw once again the old country antics. The sweet odours of sainfoin and lucerne, of alfalfa and clover, perfumed the sweaty joys of the young, the lusty and the idealist. "Who speaks of love asks to make love," said the wise Balzac. They had spoken of love all day. Her fichu of white tulle was so easily undone. Nature is the author of prevision.

Simone lay outstretched in the barn loft, in cradled sleep. Her tenth embrace, it was her first understanding. The weather turned again and rain fell heavy outside. She woke and smiled as she heard its patter against the walls. They could not leave. She gave

herself to Stéphane and the second love refreshed as the first had exhausted. She rose, took a deep breath, and held the air for an amazing time. Stéphane helped her down the ladder. Outside the cock was crowing and the morning mist was soft. They walked in the dawn and the sun made their faces warmer and clearer. Her beauty and his gaiety grew.

They came into Arles.

## *Bridal Veils and Winding Sheets*

STÉPHANE wrote to his brother. It was a long-deferred letter. He asked forgiveness for being so rude to him in Marseille and pleaded for a heartfelt reconciliation. In return for his peace offering he received a card:

M. ET MME DENYS RENOUVIER  
 MME VEUVE SABATIER  
*request the honour of your presence at the  
 marriage  
 of their son and daughter, Onésime and Cécile,  
 the civil ceremony, Hôtel de Ville  
 the religious ceremony, Protestant Temple,  
 PÉZENAS  
 on the afternoon of the 25th of August 1933.*  
*M. et Mme Onésime Sabatier will receive later at their home  
 Boulevard de la Liberté, 38, at Béziers.*  
 —R.S.V.P.

It was August 24, there was no time to lose. Despite the emphatic objections of Simone concerning the delicacy of attending her ex-lover's wedding, especially when she was now affianced to his brother, she was hustled into a train, dressed in a makeshift afternoon gown. Stéphane hired a fairly well-fitting morning costume. His last savings went into this rite and Simone became the family banker until times would alter.

"At any rate, I will allow him to complete the ceremony," she spoke generously, "though I would like to have him feel a bit of what I went through at the altar at Les Saintes-Maries when he did his knightly nonsense."

"You will see my father's old church," he sentimentalized.

Simone heartily despised both childhood sentiment and religion. "Ouf, I want now to get married on a hilltop with vistas or on a lighthouse commanding leagues of waves, something that gives marriage new land or seas to conquer. But in a crusty building given over to retailing the dead wisdom of some Arabian bandits, oh, la la, hideous."

Stéphane interrupted. "It must have been my mother that insisted; she has her rights, after all. I am sure that Onésime got no dowry. Otherwise Denys would have had all the say."

"How have they paid for this new home if there is no dowry?"

"True, perhaps he relented. The Sabatiers have always been in the eccentric orbit of their rich cousins. Gold is the sun, men are its solar system. I must draw a sketch of the pull of gold, my planets will have covetous faces."

Simone sketched the planetary systems of Morgan and Rothschild in two celestial hemispheres, but the tail of a red comet swept through both. As she finished they were near Pézenas. Their visit was anticipated, for Onésime and Cécile were there to greet the long-lost brother.

The brothers embraced and kissed each other's cheeks; then Stéphane kissed the bundle of wreaths of smiles that called itself Cécile.

"Welcome, Stéphane, you see a love affair."

"I have a love affair, too."

"Where's the girl?"

"She's coming down the station."

Onésime looked; he stepped back amazed. Simone! His victim at Les Saintes-Maries, his brother's girl? It was a kind of incest! He turned to Stéphane and asked, "Am I dead that you enjoy the levirate?"

"The levirate, what's that?" asked Cécile alarmed.

"Nothing, my dear, you have to be sunk in Huguenot slang to understand."

Simone advanced towards the group, enjoying the confused reconciliation and suspicion scene. "Permit me to introduce myself, Mlle Cécile, for I am sure it is you. I am Simone Lamouroux, one-time fiancée of your husband; I am not a bride, and you are one, because of his intervention." She bowed to Onésime, "My redeemer, knight-errant, you see I am not the wife of Lolo Priaulx. As a result,

I am so grateful to the family that my affections have stayed in its appealing circle. Don't you favour a polyandry of brothers, Mlle Cécile?"

"Obviously you do, but I have a smaller body and more sense, I am confined to my one man."

Simone was catty. "Oh, I recall, you were the young lady with whom he rolled hoops. Onésime's memory for games is tenacious. Shall you roll hoops again, Mlle Cécile? Those talents should not be neglected in your marriage!"

Cécile did not give a damn about this mean badinage for she was radiantly happy. "No, my well-wishing friend, you have it all wrong. Both Onésime and I were pretty poor at hoop-rolling and diabolos, so we are going to bring up six children to be the Nurmis of the Plateau of the Poets, scooter kings, and toy-car champions. It is our compensation."

Stéphane was truly shocked. "Simone, stop your mischief. Why must you run amuck and break up simple joys? There is a devil in you. Please, Simone, respect the happiness of others."

Simone was all aflame and mockery. "A wedding, a simple joy? Mixed up with the state, the church, the family, the contracts, the furniture dealers, the jewellers, heaven knows what else, the honeymoon resorts. A wedding simple? A hundred daggers rusty with tradition stabbed into the white body of love! A lawyer's kiss, a priest to sanction the act of love? With a savage like Lolo it is romantic, but here? Faugh!"

"I know, but we have come to a wedding. If we despise the business they could have done without our company. You cannot eat at another's table and complain of his food."

Simone tossed her naughty head. "Why should I care for the rules? I love to torment, those are my rules. Why do they invite me, a tease, if they don't let me play with my fancies?"

"They didn't invite you. I obtruded your society, so now be good."

"It is a privilege to have me, the Venus of Arles. Dug up in the very theatre in which I played for you. Not like the Venus di Milo, armless. Not with her nose pointed upwards, looking blank into space like that Milo, but one looking down, with a passionate eye! The Venus of Arles has come to this wedding holding a male helmet in her hand. I'll avenge what he did to me. I'll parade before your hypocrite brother and new-found sister." She sneered

openly. "Mlle Cécile, others have known the favours of your husband, he does well." Cécile was not hurt. Onésime had spoken to her fully. She saw his description of Simone was just.

"No, Mlle Simone, I don't resent your testimony. I too have tasted his favours, and, I am proud to say, it is I that have prevailed. He prefers my powerful simple arts to your nervous embraces. Also, Mlle Simone, I am as constant in my love as the North Star; I am as happy as a child with new toys. None of your barbs hurt me. This is the day of my life, I am a bride, my dream is fulfilled."

She took Simone's arm, "You will escort me, as I hope to escort you to the altar?"

"Gladly, Cécile." Simone stopped suddenly; she was touched. But she found it hard to be gracious and said, "I am not ashamed of myself, I just have to rollick along. Let us go towards the ceremony."

They walked through the Rue Anatole-France, large and mournful, into the dark and tortuous Rue Denfert-Rochereau. The robing was to take place in the Hôtel Malibran, the last beautiful building erected in Pézenas, a baroque job but with a wide, classic staircase, symmetrical, cold, perfect Louis XV.

Pézenas was a strange sensation to Simone; she had never seen a whole city so decrepit, broken down, not having added a single building since 1750, almost preserved in the seventeenth century as in an alcohol jar.

The stench of cats was everywhere; their ordure, high-smelling, came from the rats they had eaten, rats that rummaged in three-hundred-year-old cellars, that ate ant-infested stale straw. The walls of the city were of cold stone. It was a damp cemetery of the living only that the family vaults opened on courtyards; it was also full of charnel stinks.

They entered the Hôtel Malibran. Cécile sent the bridesmaids out of her room and asked Simone to dress her. The guests trooped to the sombre Rue Masillon where the Hôtel de Ville was hidden in a pastoral courtyard full of dogs, chickens, a public school with children's crayon drawings in window cracks, a *gendarmerie* where some soporific police looked about with histrionic hostility, grass-cracked paving stone and, in the centre, a dignified stage setting with a torn tricolour aloft. There the civil marriage was performed.

Mother Sabatier was effusive to Onésime. She was proud of her position among the Protestants of that moth-eaten town and



happy to be linked twice to the wealthy Renouviers. Denys was there, quaintly dressed in a Sam Weller costume. He was beet red. Warned by his doctors to avoid excitement, he had tried to postpone the wedding but Cécile suspected a trick. The Lévy-Ruhlmann tribe, Gisèle and François were not present. War was declared over the heritage of sixty million francs from the calmly assessed potential corpse, Denys Renouvier.

The religious ceremony took place in the bare temple. The preachers delivered a long sermon, full of Claude's purple patches, reviewing the weddings of Adam and Eve, David and Bathsheba, Philemon and Baucis, and perorating on the divine possibilities of the new couple. The chorus sang like architects, for stone on stone they built the structures of Josquin Des Près, Buxtehude and Bach. Cécile, crying, clutched her bridal nosegay, and Onésime, suddenly grown mountainous, bent with her before his father's pulpit. Even Simone wept, even Jacques and Foulques lost their badminton and handball faces.

A short reception was given in the local theatre, decaying athwart the crashing Rue Réboul. Ancient chapel of the Black Penitents, local legend insisted that here Molière first performed. It was not true although Pézenas was his first bow. There were present cognate members of the Montmorency family, lords of the city. The blood royal of France offered its mendicant flow to the cup of the risen *bourgeoisie*. The reception was French, made up of *petits fours*, *fruits glacés*, *chocolats fourrés*, coffee or linden infusions, some magnums of Pommery 1915 (nature), to toast the couple, an aromatic Armagnac presented by the chamber of commerce of Cognac to the wine king of Béziers, "our illustrious confrère, Renouvier."

The party motored to Béziers, leaving Pézenas to its morbid tranquillity, its undisturbed spiders and their geometer's cobwebs, to the bee's drone and the clatter of wearied Percherons along its splitting cobblestones. The gay fields of the up-country, legendary castles, and poplar avenues, closed parks redolent of honeysuckle, the low-lying foothills of the Cévennes flirting with the dying day, soon restored lightheartedness. Cécile turned to laughing, teased her parents, and Simone was about to travesty all and sundry, when Stéphane clamped her mouth.

They entered the garden of the newly-weds. Their noses were assailed by arbutus and sweetbriar, but the myrtle dominated, the badge of Venus. Onésime and Cécile were installed in a modest

*pavillon* of six rooms, the gift of Denys, his only dowry. The furnishings were presented by the two sports-ridden brothers. They knew their Cécile. They gave out a contract to the Primavera galleries of the Printemps store at Paris. Even the dishes carried designs of the broken guitars of Braque, the tortured anatomies of Severini. The sweep of 180 degrees from Pézenas was completed.

The reception begun at Pézenas was resumed. At eleven at night it was in motion, at five in the morning in full swing. Sherbets, arrack punch, *canapés* of Volga caviare (special roe from the French Embassy at Moscow), came out of a horn of plenty. Denys Renouvier enjoyed himself hugely. It was his show, not like that gold-plated wedding of Gisèle. He drank dangerously and ridiculed his physician, as green with fears as he was red with liquor.

Onésime stood at the oriel, fingering the soft lawn, criss-crossed curtains; he played with their ropes while waiting for the lively company to go and leave him to his wife. His brother came up and stood by the left-hand panes, leaning back. They regarded each other, exploringly, silently. Their frame, height, cheekbones much the same, but Onésime's chestnut eyes liquid, Stéphane's grey-green eyes unkind to himself. Everything in Onésime was softer: his nose not as fleshy, the curl of his nostrils shorter, the arch of his eyebrows less pointed, his ears were smaller, the acoustic chamber being minute. His chin was dimpled, Stéphane's looked nearly square. Even the curve of their backs differed, in Onésime it was nearer that of women.

Onésime spoke first: "You are an artist, I, in trade. We have exchanged parts."

"Not exchanged, assumed. I knew it when I left Marseille, ruined. I forgot my own miseries. I cried, 'Brother,' for I had been so rotten to you. Do you know why I called on you? Why? Tell me."

"You were making faces at your mirror."

"And you, Onésime, what happened to your face in that mirror?"

"Pedestrian, it looked for insanity. Romantic, it was hooked to a firebolt. Common sense regained, it came home to Cécile. It is saved."

"My lively shadow. We must at some time try the same things, yes even love the same girl. Is that why we quarrelled? A moral Siamese twin?"

"No, Stéphane. You are what I thought I was. I am your poison-taster, you the sultan. To you, the perils of the throne. I am now eating wholesome bread."

"You were afraid of the dangers of glory?"

"Of course, otherwise why did I quit?"

"Is that why I quit business?"

"Yes, my brother, failures answer everything. You lunged at money, I at Bohemia. We are better off."

"Sultans lose their heads, too."

"Stéphane, you're afraid of something. Of what?"

"Want of material. I don't know enough. I mouth phrases, but I am not carried in the mighty motion of our people. I let loose a pack of fancy songs but my hunting horn is off key. Oh, ask yourself, why do we live so little? The clock clicks substance out of your bones as it clicks ideas into your skull. I'll never finish the job."

The final toast was being offered to the newly married. One more dance and the party would be over. The two brothers shook hands. They felt a shock as though they were transferring their wraiths. Like Don Juan on the crazed summer night, they looked for their former body borne by four white-hooded monks. "Good-bye," they spoke quickly. "Good luck."

Onésime saw Lévy-Ruhlmann enter, he who had abstained from the ceremony. He and Denys were in long, whispered council. Onésime crossed the room but Cécile knew what he thought.

"No honeymoon trip, I know." She smiled. "We shall be at the warehouses this very afternoon. Dear Onésime, it is terrible but I could not enjoy the trip with that rascal here in our absence."

They knew that Denys, his ears full of their warnings, planned to escape from the Marseille squid. Denys, full of happiness, drink and resolution, toasted "the young couple," his face bloated though drawn, his hands uncertain. The party drank down the toast. He sat down and fell dead at the table.

The tension had finished him. Endocarditis and cirrhosis of the liver, arteriosclerosis and an infected molar combined their forces: one toast brought them into play at the same moment. The reception was turned into sorrow. Mme Renouvier bawled, the two boys were ashen, Cécile was hysterical, Mme Sabatier patient under the Lord's wrath, Simone drunk with the superb play, Stéphane soberly thinking of the scene as a highly charged costume painting of gaiety and death, Onésime calculated the weight of work the next day to defend the estate from the swift-arriving vultures. Cécile lamented that she could never commemorate her wedding day. The orchestras

fled out sadly. Firmin wept. The old master to him was the Rock of Ages, the North Pole, the Mount Everest, the summit of things earthly. He broke down in his grand ceremonial costume; he had tried to hold himself like a butler but he cried as a good servant.

Word spread through Béziers that the richest man in the city was dead. It became necessary for the *gardes mobiles*, on horseback, to clear the streets. Twenty thousand persons tried to fight their way into the Boulevard de la Liberté to witness the corpse's exit from his daughter's unblest new home. The folk prejudice that sees Everyman in the lives of all the rich, saw Death at the feast of the wealthy. It was a fine morality play to them.

Others whispered, of course, that Onésime had poisoned the old man to inherit the business. Socialists murmured, "Good riddance." Anarchists regretted that nature had got there before their technique of assassination (with their tongues). His café companions liked him, regretted him, but they had always been ill at ease with a man so much wealthier than they: he was as useful to their idle hours as reminiscence as he would have been as company. After Papa's death became familiar, that is within an hour, everybody in the family thought of what Onésime thought of, at once: how to preserve the estate.

Three days later, the body was buried. It was a funeral of the first class, arranged by the house of Henri de Borniol. Enormous hatchments with the letter R were over house and church. The procession was headed by major-domos, mummers, keeners and wailers. Six Protestant pastors, their white ties floating in the wind, followed, reading from the Bible. The long procession of all that was established, from civil dignitaries to the chamber of commerce, paraded to the yew-crowded Protestant cemetery. There followed the yellow face of Lévy-Ruhlmann, openly unconcerned, his head revolving robber schemes at a rate ten times as fast as the Dead March from *Saul*. On the other side of the crypt stood Onésime and Cécile, the two glowering at the enemy and his cohorts within their family fortress. Stéphane did not attend, but Simone Lamouroux, unobserved, sat on a high wall, her movie camera going steadily. She was having a grand time.

The funeral feast was based on roast veal and Sauterne. When he drank Grand-Marnier, the suggestible Lévy-Ruhlmann felt he too had Bright's disease.

*The Carcassonne Election*

LÉVY-RUHLMANN saw that there was no chance of beating Onésime directly. The will left the property to a *conseil de famille*, share and share alike. There were only two members on his side but three and the mother on the enemy stockade. The business manager was designated by four to two, as the son-in-law, Onésime, and he received plenary authority. He held control of a majority in the Renouvier businesses and of the Renouvier interests in Lévy-Ruhlmann's business. He proposed to use his nuisance value to the full.

It was necessary to impress the apparently characterless Jacques and Foulques. Suddenly they became the darlings of all eyes. Everybody plotted for their colourless favour. They could hand control to either group. Mother and Cécile were inflexible, so were Gisèle and François. The two apparent nitwits confederated at once, held court, listened to the imprecations, arguments, offers of bribery. The valuation showed the family fortune higher than was expected, seventy millions. The amount of saliva that flowed in envious mouths would have floated a caravel loaded with Bokhara ornaments, with the rugs of Isfahan, the stones of the Transvaal. For the moment the boys adhered to Onésime. They felt safer with the weaker party.

It was necessary to impress the two brothers. Even the stupidest Frenchman, even the apache, is susceptible to political prestige. The member for Carcassonne had resigned. A by-election was ordered. The conservative element was solicited by Lévy-Ruhlmann with eighty thousand arguments to nominate the monocled man, François Renouvier. His former monarchical tendencies were glossed over. He was chosen as the candidate of "republican concentration," a fusion of all parties on the Right. It was a radical constituency but the Left were divided into three sections. It looked like a walk-over.

The communists nominated the inevitable Monderoy, candidate by rotation in every Southern district and as yet never elected. The

socialists were proud to contest. Carcassonne is in the Aude. The principal member for the Aude is Léon Blum for Narbonne. They chose Marius Sallière, lawyer and attorney for the cap-maker's union. He was blessed by the Blum Committee at Narbonne. The socialist flag, three arrows on red, was lifted to celebrate the choice.

The radicals picked a professor of philosophy at Narbonne, Georges Duval, as drab as his average name. No sooner were the candidacies announced than the odds were three to one on François.

The opening meetings of the four candidates were a dissection. They laid society on a table. The first mass meeting was that of M. Georges Duval. His assembly met in the Superior School for Girls (women do not vote in France). The futility of his location was matched by his words. He spoke to an audience of civil servants, teachers, small business men, doctors, lawyers, *rentiers* on the edge of starvation, foremen and winetasters. The French flag, the principles of 1789, the Phrygian cap were everywhere. The essence of his speech was in his conclusion:

"Fellow citizens, the hour has struck; France trembles on the edge of an abyss. She is a flower that two hungry beasts look upon with longing eyes. Fascism on the one hand and Communism on the other, with their varying tyrannies, seek to devour this tender herb. Socialism offers us bureaucracy; the shameful conservative parties negate the spirit of man!

"Radical Socialism, the party of equality of opportunity and rights, of the liberty of the individual to live his life providing he respects the other's equal right to the same, and fraternity (the love of Frenchmen for each other), we are the party that reconciles the social and the individual in man! What we require is the rights of small capital against plutocrats, and the division of the profits of this hygienic operation between labour and enterprise. The aims of socialism are noble, achieve them by liberty!"

Amid a quiet stamping of refined feet, a blowing of noses into good lawn and cambric handkerchiefs, Georges Duval was chosen as the candidate of the middle way.

The rally of Comrade Sallière was far more animated. It was held in the Place des Herbes, the market place, long, arboreal, centred in a pretty white-marble fountain with Neptune and his four marine horses swishing their tails in grand style. The message of M. Léon Blum's committee was read. It commended the fighting comrade.

"On behalf of the *République Sociale* of Narbonne and the Marxist

circles of the Aude, we offer felicitations to Comrade Sallière. Steeped in the philosophy of the working class, he disdains showy compromise and vain words. Forward to the International!"

The Comrade, carefully dressed in the best bourgeois manner (so as not to appear a vulgar demagogue), took the stand. His speech was uttered before highly paid workers, humbler teachers, poor journalists, middle-class peasants, farm tenants, employees. Caps were far more numerous than at the rally of M. Georges Duval. But there was a fair sprinkling of felt hats, too, even Borsalinos.

Comrade Sallière was twenty minutes speech and forty minutes peroration. He concluded:

"Forward, fellow workers to a France, free, prosperous, socialist. No slave of Moscow or Berlin, no follower of wretched and limited individualisms, it condemns capitalism, bureaucracy, and tyranny, black and red alike. Nevertheless, it always prefers Communism to Fascism." (*Très bien, très bien.*) "Comrades, to the inspired leadership of Blum!"

Comrade Monderoy's rally was held in the fields near the new bridge over the Aude. Above the meeting place towered, two hundred feet high, the wonder of the world, the old Cité of Carcassonne. Dream of the Middle Ages, centre of song cycles and legends, the greatest extant fortification prior to Vauban, even now, in its schematic restoration, a Noah's Ark of turrets and ramparts, double walls, church tower, a castle magnified to rival a cosmos; it was the leviathan of the picturesque. A mile in perimeter; it flashed in the afternoon sun. An old dwelling of pugnacious man was looking down upon the rally of a rising class, the militant workers of the South of France.

The reunion began with a show of clenched fists, the *Internationale*, the raising of red standards with the hammer and sickle embossed in gold thereon, the star of the Third International guiding the three bearded mages, Marx, Engels, Lenin, to shower the light of theory on the proletarian child born in the filthy manger of capitalism.

The audience consisted only of cap wearers. It was the manuscript of workaday poverty, but it featured poor skins, broken and brown teeth, eyes sunken, if vivid, small stature, underweight, shabby clothing, but no tramp clothing. It was the decent proletariat. They were the clothworkers, tanners, corkmakers, fruit preservers, canal-workers. The Comrade was acclaimed by the audience, standing.

"Members of the working class, we insist on a Popular Front, the only strategy that will redeem us from Fascism. We demand the

election of communists, not so as to surpass the other parties, but so that this Popular Front may not be amorphous, that it may have a vertebral column of sound theory. In exchange for that we must suffer bitter disappointments, even betrayals. We must not wince. A class like the working class both makes history by its action and is made in history. To adjust the nice balance between the two is proletarian statesmanship, far higher than the devices of a Talleyrand.

"To the workers of Carcassonne, I say. Let us urge a reconstruction of the fine-woollen industry as an immediate demand. The day must come when the Spanish merino fleeces that once came to us shall again be woven here into the finest wools in commerce. Proud, free city of Carcassonne, the day must come again when your cloth factories send their consuls to Rhodes and Alexandria, when our cloths hold the supremacy of the Levant, the Indies, the lands of the Antilles. The Carcassonne Soviet alone could produce this (wild acclaim).

"Do we love this fair city? Then away with the vain words of archæologists, of the necrophilists of history, the corpse lovers among the cultured! The working class will hold the key to a new civilization, true chatelains of Carcassonne, the key of Languedoc!"

The meeting ended in the inevitable sequence, the appeal for aid to the workers in "White" prisons, made by the International Red Aid.

But the noise of the election was furnished by François Renouvier and the cash register of M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. It grouped everybody who was anybody in the town. The following groups declared that it was no longer possible to ignore politics at this moment of crisis and that Renouvier was the man:

*The Echo of Carcassonne* (daily), *Shock!!* a Dadaist and futurist local review (monthly), *The Scaffolding* (monthly), magazine of poetry and pure literature, *The Occitanian* (Aquitanian) *Review* of the Aude, *The Septimanian Courier*, the Provençal Nationalists, the Authoritarians, the League of Landlords, the Chamber of Commerce, the Syndicate for Tourists and Ancient Beauty, the Association of Friends of the Cité (the fortress town on the hill), the Archæological and Learned Society, the local Academy of Sciences and Letters, the owners of brothels, the gambling-casino proprietor, the correspondents of Paris sporting papers, city contractors.

All that was swaddled in revenues, cash, standing, vice, taste,



snobbery, posture, pretence and posh rallied to François Renouvier. His meetings were too numerous to be held in one place. His headquarters were not in a bar-room, as tradition calls for, but in a luxury hotel for American and British visitors. Hence the bar-room and café owners were the only capitalists against him to a man.

Rarely has the union of highest and lowest been more perfectly consummated than for stodgy, silly François Renouvier.

The three cinemas held overflow meetings, so did the municipal theatre. Finally the great rally was held, justly for a party devoted to dead ideas, in the open-air theatre of the dead city, inside the fortress on the hill. There were present the National Union of Veterans, the Smashed Phizzes, the Veterans of 1870, the Union of Taxpayers. These paladins were placed on the platform. They had immense concentrated faces (except the war-smashed), broad, with aggressive though clipped moustaches. The rallies were attended by the best-dressed ladies in Carcassonne, that is those who ordered 1930 fashions from the catalogue of the good old Catholic Bon Marché store in Paris. They looked charitable.

Five publishers and seven booksellers, the culture bearers of the city, were on the seats of honour. "Don't ignore them, François," Lévy-Ruhlmann counselled. "Make your opponents look like the enemies of civilization! Never forget you are a Doctor of Laws."

M. François Renouvier was dressed in English clothing. He wore a striped suit, of Bradford woollens, done by an English tailor at Nice. His monocle looked as significant as that of M. Joseph Caillaux. In France a monocle means either a *gaga* nobleman, an Englishman, an impresario, a Balkan schemer or a minister of finance.

"France needs authority and few words. Therefore, I speak little. This country reached its apogee under François I, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Napoleon III. Whenever it has had a chief, whether Philippe-Auguste, Louis XI, Richelieu, it has governed Europe. France knows one liberty, the liberty to follow a strong regime.

"What are you to oppose to Italy, to Germany, to England governed on an aristocratic principle? Red eyewash? Parliamentary palaver? Governments alternating every six months by the caprice and aimless bickerings of deputies? No, authority, the defence of property, the right of every man to save the fruits of his toil and pass it on to his children. Frenchmen, you save all your life for

your sons and daughters. Will you allow the Reds to tear away from our lives the incredible beauty of family life by their demands for exaggerated wages? A society trembles in the balance.

"Oh, justice, take off your blindfold, come into the market place, strike with your sword, crack the emblem of power over the heads of the vile multitude. I care for only one France, strong, based on labour and savings."

He spoke for three hours on why he hated words. The meeting ended with the *Marseillaise*. Some old gentry sang *Partant pour la Syrie*, and François Renouvier, ex-Royalist, who detested the *Marseillaise* more than any other song (for it was a republican chant), was forced to smile, grimace and pretend to join.

Their torchlight-procession went down the Rue de la Mairie, Grande-Rue, Rue Courtejaire, to the principal square. It was an insolent swagger of the Right, the Croix de Feu in the lead. It was worth the bones of any known radical to get in the way of that parade. It was consciously colourful. Thousands of smart uniformed young men, in military step, were carrying green blazing torches down the long ramp from the castle city over the midnight stream, into the hushed old mercantile city. From the castle walls, that city looked Algerian, on a plain, chessboard, built with low flat red roofs. It gave a colonial feeling to the dominant class.

"What do you think, Adèle?" François asked full-flushed. "Won't we wipe out Blum, that shame of the Aude?"

"Oh, you're as good as elected, my dear friend," Adèle simpered. "They can barely get as many meetings between them as you had to-night."

"I understand," said François servilely, "that a De Comminges was there to-night. Imagine that! In their fief of Carcassonne! An honour."

"There are ten proletarian votes to one Pourceaugnac," Lévy-Ruhlmann reminded them. "You forget the object of this whole election, my son. Were Jacques and Foulques present?"

"They were in the first row exulting that a Renouvier at last was something more than a vulgar tradesman. They were impressed."

François acknowledged his following from the balcony of the hotel. By his side Adèle tried to look a *dame patronesse*. Rashi-Mordecai was in full regalia, medals, decorations, honours. Gisèle waved to the crowd.

The next day the polling was intense. The results were published

at ten at night at the Hôtel de Ville. They read: Renouvier, 5700; Monderoy, 3700; Sallière, 3300; Duval, 3000.

A second election was necessary, no one had a clear majority.

Immediately Lévy-Ruhmann went to the Radical Socialist leaders and made a deal with the more conservative among them to knife the communist candidate who must become the standard-bearer on the Left. Despite the loyal behaviour of Sallière and Duval who desisted in favour of Monderoy, the election was in the bag, for the majority of the radicals had been pledged to François.

Onésime and Cécile arrived the next day and immediately inserted in the *République Sociale* a pretty item:

Is it not a fact that the financing of the Renouvier campaign has been done by an Israelite, M. Lévy-Ruhmann? Is it not true that that ardent conservative republican, M. Renouvier, was sentenced to be fined three times in Paris for assailing Jews? Is it not true that this spokesman for law and order (with a bastinado) was a member in good standing, even a year ago, of the Royalist groupings? Was he not once charged with the most heinous moral offence known, and is it not a fact that he did nothing to refute this charge?

This imbecile, who barely passed his examination in law, who bribed another student to take the examination in Roman law to achieve even this miserable result, this assaulter, raper, anti-Semite, and monarchist is a fit standard-bearer on the Right—they are entitled to him, let them cherish him.

When Foulques and Jacques read the item they dreaded a storm. They were more afraid of adverse publicity than any other beings, for as figurines they hated to be disturbed even to be dusted. They came back scared to Béziers, and soon were persuaded to sign powers over to Cécile while they went on to Paris for some tournament or other, "to escape the scandal."

They got out in time. The centre republicans came up and demanded an immediate refutation of the charge that François was a monarchist. When he hemmed and hawed they gave him the sack. The Radical Socialist leaders who were bribed could no longer deliver their following. Rashi-Mordecai demanded an explanation of the anti-Semite story. When it was not forthcoming he insisted, in military choler, that Adèle leave this deceiving monster. When

Lévy-Ruhlmann admitted he knew it all the time and had bartered his daughter to a *rishes*, Rashi-Mordecai stamped and asked Gisèle why she had been silent but, for all that, he was kind to her. The news of the family rift was also made public through the stair-soaping of Onésime.

The second ballot read: Monderoy, 7800; Renouvier, 4700. Over three thousand two hundred abstained.

Lévy-Ruhlmann was sad. "You don't see enough with a monocle," was his pronouncement. François swore it was the Jews, for he forgot himself and repeated his old phrases. Lévy-Ruhlmann arched his eyebrows and shrugged, then spat.

BOOK FOUR

SPITFIRE AND PLOTTER



*De Pressensé's Caverns Are Not Empty*

THE wind-swept Quai de Joliette at Marseille is nearly deserted at night. Along it hobbled, mumbling to himself, a hunchbacked old man, deranged and poor. He dragged along the quay, especially when it rained, suspicious, turning frequently, shaking an ash stick at boys that railed at him. The prophet Elisha could not have been more severe. He haunted the abandoned warehouses of Pressensé et Cie, now boarded over with foreclosing-sale notices of the banks. He would cry heavily, then force in a broken door that everyone knew was open anyway, and hop in. The watchmen, gendarmes, customs inspectors, stevedores along the quay regarded him with compassion as well as giving him an occasional gibe.

"That's old Pressensé, once the king of the waterfront, the one Lévy-Ruhlmann wiped out. He retired to the country, went mad and is now circling about his former warehouses."

"Yes," said the fat customs guard at the Orient Line docks, "he's crazy; he thinks he still owns it. He gives orders in a loud voice to imaginary clerks. He came over here the other night with a torn newspaper and asked me to certify the cargo declaration. Poor old fellow."

On fair nights Pressensé was never seen. No one knew where he lodged but, judging by appearances, it must either be a doss house or an opium den. Like an accursed spirit, he was forced to tread the docks only when the elements were fierce.

When the legend had been completed, Pressensé got down to business. He had created the atmosphere he wanted. He built a back entrance with a staircase leading from a hotel in a street behind the old warehouse. He got himself a nice arrangement among the wine casks and even had them cleaned. There he sat and plotted his return.

The pathetic beggar face was altered. The sharp eyes flashed telegrams to unseeing walls. He mused, but mused systematically. His fade-out was a great stage effect. It had impressed Stéphane.

His return was spooky and near maniac. Pressensé had an actor's capacity for taking on exhausting roles for years and for being able to divest himself of them, even physically, within a minute. He never confused his act with himself, hence he was perfect in each part.

He had a fair amount of money. It was loaned him by his brother, the Bishop of Carpentras. It was small change for business but adequate for conspiracy.

His brother was unaware of his business. His own schemes to seize an archiepiscopal chair required some cash, but he helped his merchant brother first, convinced that a man who once has made millions can do so again. With the proceeds he saw himself in a red hat, one of the six cardinals of France. Besides, the bishop was a younger brother and respected the head of the family.

He had failed, true, but because of Lévy-Ruhlmann: he would even accounts with him as the Church once had the will to do with his tribe. With the money which the good bishop loaned Pressensé went a more precious gift, the priest Athanase Fabre. Fabre was twenty-four, ordained, graduate of the French college at Rome. He was the honours man of his class. He had sucked in the Vatican library like a vacuum cleaner. The dust of the scholastics settled in his brainpan. It whirled about in a gust of ambition.

He had strolled often down the Via Sistina, past its German-owned English teashops decorated in the Florentine manner, and worked out schemes for beating the self-electing and self-perpetuating Italian majority in the College of Cardinals. When he became private secretary to the ambitious Bishop of Carpentras, that sleek ecclesiastic, after one experience of his secretary's priestly fury, saw that by comparison he was a man of modest expectations. For, in Fabre, ambition ate up everything. It had no bounds, it had no fellow nor neighbour; it was pure. He was a clerical Bonaparte.

The Bishop excused Fabre from his clerical duties, "for a holiday," and told him he could make a fortune in Marseille. The priest was glad to be free of the indignity of secretaryship; he viewed this obvious shelving of himself as opportunity. The mitred coward lent him to his brother. The priest came into the caverns on a stormy night. The outer harbour of Marseille had collected all the winds of the Gulf of the Lion and its waves were thrown against the walls of warehouses. Against this unbelievable spray the young priest strode undeterred. His skirts swept around him, his large



black buttoned shoes were soaked, his shovel hat was swept away, but he strode on like a machine, his step powerful, unflinching, his speed never altering. He entered the cavern unconcerned.

Nothing impressed him. The half-mile, so it seemed, of wine vaults, the immense broken casks, the feeble flickering light; this was a priest's theatre, the kind that a crafty lieutenant of the Sforzas or Borgias would have found natural. The mysteries of heaven and earth were nothing to him, they were the *mise en scène* of the mob, the gewgaws of sleight-of-hand littérateurs. The church was his office, there he converted bread into God. In the caverns he hoped he would convert his poverty into wealth.

He swept his cloak about him, over the shoulders, and bowed. "I am addressing M. de Pressensé?"

"The same."

"I have a letter from your brother." There was a wide swath to everything he did.

Pressensé looked up. The young man was tall, hook-nosed, but that nose was long, he was thin-faced. His eyes cut through the objects they perceived; they were as terrible as a guillotine knife. He cared for nobody; his face showed it. He was the womanless man called *the priest* in all Protestant lands. He spoke at once.

"I must ask for proof that you are M. de Pressensé. I can deliver no letters of this importance without proof."

"I can show you my card of identity with a stamped photograph. Also my picture is in my brother's study." He handed over the document, carefully appraising the downright fellow. When the priest was satisfied, he presented Pressensé with his own proofs, with equal thoroughness.

"Sit down, my good friend. Do you know why you were taken off the payroll of the bishop and hooked on to mine?"

"Because my talents were too important for a secretaryship."

"No, because you are an ambitious nuisance. You are so obviously a terror to competitors that they give you a wide berth. Now, true ambition behaves differently. It knows that ambition gets nowhere apart from the help of other men. Do not be openly ambitious. It alienates the very persons you have to impress. In any case, Father, from now on you are attached to my service, that is, unless you want to scribble at my brother's dictation."

The thin-faced fanatic snapped, "I take no advice from anyone and especially not from a layman. The Church is big enough for

my talents. It has attracted the most vigorous men in all ages, the men strong enough to stay away from the temptation of women."

"But not of this age."

Pressensé saw that he did not impress this astounding young man. He thought: If windstorms and caverns, Rome and bishops, merchants and shippers, do not interest him one bit, nothing ever will. He is so strong, so self-contained, that he can be dangerous to himself.

"You are valuing me, I see it by your face," said the priest. "I know voices in the confessional by their sibilance and hesitation; I know thoughts by their effect on the countenance. I warn you not to think of me as an object of your manipulation. I know exactly what I am, what I must watch, what I want."

"Have some wine, at least." M. de Pressensé did not dare smile.

"No, I had my daily allowance of food and drink, I never go beyond. It is an indulgence, it causes everyone's downfall."

Pressensé decided to think without registering. Apparently mooning, he noted that this man had all the diseases of ambition, for he was ascetic too. "I shall not press you, I leave you to yourself," commented the old man.

The priest spoke at cannon-ball speed. "It is I who tell you what I want to do. I want to make ten million francs. I want to make it in a hurry. I need it in my career. A poor priest has practically no chance. I want to be mitred early; I want to rise to a cardinalate while I can still enjoy it. As they say in Marseille, they want to bite their apples before they lose their teeth."

"But the Marseillais mean that every man should retire in the latter thirties or early forties for two or three years. It is a saying the very opposite of ambition. It prefers early enjoyment to success."

"I want both. You are all beaten by traditions. I want to rise, to be rich, to enjoy power, and to get it young and hold it long. A mere soldier like Bonaparte could do it, a priest can do far more."

"Why don't you write scholastic treatises, deliver flashy sermons?"

"Society stuff. Money is a razor, swift, clean. M. de Pressensé, to our point, what do I do here? Answer me directly."

"I accept no orders either, I will answer you in due course. You will obey me as my brother has instructed. You will hate me in any case, so you can go to hell. Don't tell me to answer you directly." Pressensé looked up quickly. "You may hope to

be rich but you are poor now. One word from my brother and you are snuffed out although you are a hissing candle. Report to me to-morrow. Ambition should know enough to obey orders implicitly. Bonaparte did."

When the superb priest walked out, grand, straight, potent, De Pressensé enjoyed himself dwarfishly. "Why can't he bend? There must be a crick in his neck. I'll fix that proud baby."

The next day Fabre called and was told to come later. Day after day, Pressensé humiliated him, disciplined him. He expected Fabre to murder him. When he did not attempt it, he thought: There is something soft in his marrow though he thinks himself fierce. After all, he needs soup. I will be able to use him.

Pressensé in the meantime had tried to obtain credit on the basis of the deposits he made in his banks. But one day Lévy-Ruhlmann coming out of the Bourse, saw this ghost. He was choked with superstitious terror. He gave instructions to the banks that he would withdraw his important, profitable accounts if they went so far even as to accept deposits from Pressensé. The wizened competitor had never met opposition as baffling as this. Pressensé had been crushed but never so harassed.

Pressensé's funds soon gave out. The bishop's alms were frittered away. Pressensé had failed in his revenge. The mitre still floated in the air, its ribbons flapping at his brother. Fabre, the ambitious, on the other hand, wrote concise terrible sermons while awaiting wealth. His style improved with hope deferred.

So Pressensé was driven to the refuge of every bankrupt importer—smuggling and traffic in narcotics. The watchman of the caverns, dull, bullocky Marius Combes, obeyed the master as though he were still in possession. The former owner had his caches in the cellars, knew the numbered flagstones, knew where the well was. The docks were guarded by new, and as yet uncorrupted, watchmen and customs guards. But Pressensé still had the loyalty of skippers and mates and cooks and cabin boys, who sensed that he was terribly rich, that this was an act, a clever dodge, and that there would be money in working with him.

Fabre visited the boats as chaplain. His terrific speed as he entered, the swish of his robes, his conquest of the gang-plank as he mounted, his imperial survey as he left the docks, all made it seem natural not to question him.

In two weeks, half the heroin in France was carried into Marseille

in the sash of Father Athanase Fabre. Sometimes he carried it under the body of some sailor to whom he had administered the last sacraments. Or he would walk behind an empty coffin sprinkling, but watching the "dope" cache within.

Pressensé made two million francs in a month, he gave Athanase two hundred thousand. The priest was enchanted. He had made more money in a month than his father, an ox-cart driver near Valence, had made in his entire life. He relished the career but now he was impossible. His thin face became more ascetic, more determined.

At night, as Pressensé handed out the supplies to distributors he had known so well in the ordinary pharmaceuticals traffic, the priest sat beside him in the caverns writing out long dogmatic treatises whose brilliant serried reasoning was expressed in concise, crisp phrases. For now that he had money and was on the way to being a millionaire, he believed in writing.

"I thought you told me books and sermons were a waste of time," Pressensé said blandly.

"They are a waste of time to a poor priest, unless he is prepared to succeed at sixty or seventy. But a rich priest must depend on more than money. Money advances his fame but he must have something that money can argue for."

So Pressensé sold heroin, cocaine, opium, morphine, laudanum, veronal, codeine, so many multiple forms of each other. He soon extended his range and the sterile priest brought in ergot and other abortion medicines of the emmenagogue groups. The priest later composed a brimstone sermon on birth control, commented on the words, "Increase and multiply." Not even Bossuet, Bishop of Condom, could have bettered it.

In three months, by October, Pressensé was king of criminal importing. He got on splendidly with the numerous gangsters in the business, for he divided with each and everyone. The simple device of the priest, ever consoling and ever active on the ships, made it so much less expensive for the distributors, that they were glad to give Pressensé his reasonable rake-off. Athanase Fabre became the most celebrated underworld character in Marseille. "The Church next," he determined. "Three months has been enough for me to prove invaluable to a still sillier group than my lord bishops." He was worth six hundred thousand francs.

He scribbled furiously. Every franc gave pith to his style, every

centime garnished his metaphors. Money gave him wings as well as sharpening his predatory beak. He looked thinner than ever as he hustled about. He slept in the cavern now and he got up in the middle of the night to compose arguments that would impress the virtuous but not wide-awake episcope.

He forgot only one thing, that the very source of his money was a brother of a bishop and that he was always in the grip of Pressensé. Had he remembered it, he would have whisked it away, for he was now insupportable in his pride. He ordered the old master about. "Without my robes, what are you? A vulgar trafficker in narcotics like a thousand others; it is the priest that gives scope to your undistinguished mind."

One morning there walked into the cavern none other than Melchior Aboudaram. He was no longer the slick, perfumed harem beauty he had been. A year at hard labour brought out the sallow face and high bones of a fellah. He had only one idea in life, he thought, talked, dreamed of nothing else. That was to murder Lévy-Ruhlmann.

"God bless us, here is Melchior." The little eyes of Pressensé shone; he foresaw his uses. "Melchior, my poor friend, me ruined, you in prison, what we owe that man! I am a cavern rat, but I am ready to play the man. You, poor Melchior, what can I do for you? Command me, I am at your service."

"Give me something to eat and drink."

"Gladly, dear Melchior. Have you any place to stay? No? Then stay with me. I live in a small lodging-house in the old town opposite the Hôtel-Dieu. There is an extra room beside mine. Be my guest, I pray you. Well now, let us go to the little White Russian restaurant; that's right, the Isba. No one will know us there. I love their *piroshki*, so exotic. Also cream beet soup. Melchior, I will make you fat again, fat, rich, happy. I, at least, was always your friend."

Pressensé knew very well that Melchior Aboudaram had betrayed him consistently to Lévy-Ruhlmann, but Melchior, confused by a year in jail had forgotten his slip of the tongue, and still treated Pressensé as the Chinese mandarin, Sum Dum Goy.

"Who's the actor dressed up as a priest who thinks his eyes are a carpenter's gimlet? He's a cheap dick, I suppose?"

"No, Melchior, you have dicks on the brain. It's natural." Pressensé explained what Fabre did.

Aboudaram rubbed his hands; it was the first sign of the old boy come back. "Great stunt, great."

"I have one object in life," Pressensé said exploringly, while sampling some undistinguished exile's *zakuska*, "to get Lévy-Ruhlmann. But I suppose that you are restrained by racial feeling. Natural."

It clicked. Aboudaram looked directly at him, his lips pursed, then his underlip was dented by his incisors, and he said quietly, "I hate him in a very special way because he used my race to get me down. He will pay for every day I spent in jail. I intend to get him on a Chinese ship where they can work their tortures on him, three hundred and sixty-five varieties. I shall finish him off by inches. He will suffer endlessly. His body is old, shrunk, crumbling, but I will scar it and slit it with a ritual knife. I shall do it carefully and rub salt into the cuts. I will add vinegar for good measure, fine wine vinegar. There will be no complaints about quality. I hate him. I hate him awake and asleep. For every night on my jail bed I saw him, I stuck him with hypodermics."

He wept at the table. "I loved life and elegance so much. I was so soft and refined. Oh God, prison! What men, what habits!" He looked even sicker. "I retched from prison food and the odour was Lévy-Ruhlmann. I will kill him, kill him."

"I have very much the same idea, and our friend Fabre may come in handy. But Melchior, repose yourself, we shall go to the Hammam later on, restore you, and the three of us talk over matters."

*A Winter's Tale to St. John's Eve*

STÉPHANE stopped from work to light a cigarette, sprawl on the sofa, and yawn. Simone was over the first transports of submission and, as a man in carpet slippers was her abomination, she lowered rifles and fired. "Wouldn't you like me to marry you instanter, on the spot, pronto, pouf, presto? It would so compose you, my dear. Weddings are so contagious. Perhaps, dear, when we were legally linked, you could spend the rest of your time painting still life, landscapes of those dear old sunsets, or other bovine bosh. Now wouldn't you like that, my dear? Your soul seems to call for peace." Stéphane took a puff. He was indifferent to her perennial stoking, his fires were banked.

"Did you taunt me again, mischief?" he drawled. She was furious.

"You are dull, all you men. A woman, a volcano: she spouts her passions out of an immense crater, set about," and then she laughed, "with sweet ferns, a land of underwoods. I'm a damned fool. Let me get a price and I'm a fallen girl. But you throw yourself away, Simone, that's romantic."

"No, my darling insatiable. God knows, a race-horse champion, put out to stud, is a laggard compared to me. When infinite calls on finite, you are astounded I do not respond. Simone, listen. If I am ever to paint I must keep some strength. My head is swimming and here you are fresh as a marguerite. What I call satisfaction, you use as an appetizer. We have some money. I have no further excuse. We must paint. Leave me enough ambition to do something else, then our love would fire my soul. As it stands, I will soon be planted alongside Denys Renouvier with his heart, liver and teeth gone. Save me or I perish!"

Simone liked funny images. "Poor, dear Stéphane, the sun of Provence hasn't beat its African rays into my hide these score of years and more for nothing. I am a fruit whose juices are sun-thickened. Would you want me otherwise?" She stopped quickly.

She was ashamed of her wanton speech. "Do I ask too much, Stéphane? I worship your talent. Am I an obstacle? Tell me. I love you so. You forgive me, Stéphane?"

She was in a penitent mood, no trace of raillery was left.

Stéphane took her by the ear and dragged her about the room. Then he took off the carpet slipper she so maligned and gave her a grand paddywhack on her lithe olive bottom. After which he stood her up and ordered her to salute. "You will spend the winter at Nîmes. You will work there all day long. I do the shopping and washing up, you the cooking. We divide house-cleaning; each works on alternate days. You sponge on your father. I will sell my canvases. Each pays half. You will do this until you have the sense to marry me legally. Understood, private?"

"Yes my captain."

"Pack then, my child, the military vaudeville is over."

They settled at Nîmes as he wished. It was not possible to live together at Arles where her father insisted on legal marriage. But they could do anything they pleased an hour away! He was a liberal but he had to keep a small business going in a gossip town.

In Nîmes they got a studio with north light, one which the mistral, sweeping down from the high mountains, assaulted with such fury that the attic felt like a ship. The studio panes crashed three times during the dreaded storms. Their papers were kept under weights. The furies of the winter sufficed; Simone, in contrast, was as good as her word. She was discreet, tactful, and more than considerate. The artist in her, the wife in her, were paramount. She had not deceived herself. Stéphane's work was her preoccupation. Her own was too excited to advance. She never bettered her work, although her flashes of insight were, at rare moments, ahead of her hard-working consort.

"Marry me, Simone, marry me, why do you always refuse?" He looked at her across the crude table. She ladled her soup bowl and supped until the peacock, painted by Breton peasants, could be seen.

"Because I hate marriage with a grown man. It is possible with a child, a primitive. It hurts to link it to intelligence. I think I know why. When I saw Cécile married, I wept for the hideousness of it. Here was a girl, once the sauciest, liveliest in Béziers they tell me, her colour as intense as that of little creatures. Here she was, approved by a father so decayed that death was ready to



take him. That horrified me. Stéphane, we don't see merely with the eyes. A huntsman might be sharper than Titian. Nor with the brain. The most learned painters are trite. We paint from the heart which rejects ugliness while every chord responds to beauty. Marriage is a tribal play. It uses actors. That is the second plane, as creation and action are the first plane. Stéphane," she held out her hand, "never ask me to marry you, it shocks me." He understood her nature, he desisted. The rarest of women, but that one was his.

All winter he worked in a frenzy. Nîmes is fairly warm, even in December. Truly cold days are rare. It is the winds that plague the city.

He painted everywhere in that theatrical town: on the heights of Mont Cavalier; next to the mysterious Tour Magne; in the Garden of the Fountain, one of the superb creations of Europe, its four basins luxurious and harmonious; at the Fountain of Nîmes, the foundation of the city; at the so-called Temple of Diana or Serapis (perhaps some antique bath porch); at the base of statues more finely carved than the absurd ones on the Plateau of the Poets in his native town.

His easel, blown down by the wind so often, was set up again in the melancholy, delicate canal of the Fountain, the quiet lane of unobtrusive private banks, and recessive rich dwellings. The flowers pushed their pale faces forwards even in winter. They soon wilted.

But he was alive; his powers became terrifying. The Esplanade at Nîmes found in him its recorder; the mighty pile of the *Lycée*, the white perfection of the Amphitheatre, were reduced to designs. He spent his leisure in the perfectly typical provincial museum with the perfectly typical secondary works of typical first masters.

The attic was too draughty. He was ill for two weeks. They had a splendid time looking for new quarters. The department of Gard is the home of luxury. The people are mad spenders. They love comfort and they love to display their prosperity. Hence, wherever they sought lodgings, they found the rooms weighted down with mahogany furniture of the most doubtful taste, in rooms stuffed with velvet draperies, a grand piano at the side. The styles of the Second Empire still cluttered about with their Bourse-born decorations. It made it hard for artists to live. At last they settled in the home of a pastor, M. Guizot. His house was quietly, austere furnished.

He was a severe man, scholarly, desperately in need of a few francs for bare survival. Ardent Calvinist, uncompromising, dogmatic, tense, he was out of favour with the more Laodicean elements in his church. He had been relegated to a mean rural temple near by at Aiguesvives.

The presence of this strange, transfixed mortal, lost in contemplations of the nature of evil and the topography of hell and also of the full grandeur of salvation, stimulated Stéphane to a deeper, darker vision, but merely piqued Simone. "Imagine such reflections in our land where the sky is without a cloud for months at a time. Franz Hals sits in a land of perpetual rain and fog and he is merry, and Guizot, here, salts the earth with tears amidst sunshine."

"True," Stéphane remembered, "but they say more people seek suicide in June than in November, on sunny days than on dreary ones. The Inquisition flourished in the sun, the dark skies of Amsterdam looked on tolerance."

Simone, incorrigible Latin, defended her own. "Oh, no. Toleration was the rule of the Roman Empire until they met crazy Palestinians who insulted the emperor."

"What do we do with all this?" asked Stéphane.

"I too will paint gloomy subjects for a change," Simone deduced unexpectedly.

They were doing well. In this quiet home, Simone, without household tasks, at last finished a painting that did her credit. It was based on the fancies of Max Ernst but was too slavish. Its balloon interpretation of the Madonna, of the parachute of the Baptist wafting her son down in a bathtub, of a clown with a stick beating down an octopus wearing three silk opera hats, on each of which was printed: "Servant of the servants of God," all showed how deeply her age had affected her, how much she saw with the eyes of Paris.

"Do you think my symbols are concrete enough? Too bizarre?"

"No," said Stéphane, "but they are another fellow's baggage, he left it in the waiting-room of the Gare des Artistes and you picked up his ticket. Work your own way. You laughed at my brother when he imitated Van Gogh. If we are to be one of a school, let's go to Paris. There we will meet studio sets; we will know what's snuff; we'll be all right. Not that I am opposed to it; a man must know what stirs other artists. Why am I in Nîmes, though? It is because I want first of all to be Stéphane Sabatier. Unless I have

something to say that no one else has quite said before, let my brush fall from my hands. After I am Stéphane Sabatier, I can see what I must take over from other men, the better to tell my message. How does one know a crank? If a man is thoroughly versed in the tradition, he is not a crank but rather he is an original when he rejects others' viewpoints. I will have to correct my single vision, so that I can know whether I am an eccentric or I have a genuine new contribution. Simone, first of all, we ought to be competent artists. After that, genuinely ourselves, and lastly citizens of the republic of artists. Don't paint borrowed symbols. Paint as you talk, Simone, vivaciously, rapidly, teasing, full of quick snatches of curious imagery, not laboured symbols. I know you well, I will be able to tell you when you are really yourself."

Simone hated criticism. She strutted about and wanted to deliver a speech beginning with, "I turn out one good job, you fifty daubs," or, "A good copy is worth ten poor originals," or, "I asked you to look at a picture, not tag on your world scheme." But she held tongue, and so got the time in which to fall thoughtful.

Despite his advice, Stéphane too was affected by others. He had five models, unconsciously, but still models. They were the Bosch of the Escorial roof, Ensor of the *Masques*, Daumier's oils, especially the parody on melodrama, Hogarth's Bedlam scene in the Rake's Progress, and Goya's "Death over the Soldiers," in *Desastres de la Guerra*. He lovingly studied these reproductions. These works were packed with references, full of allusive qualities; like mines they yielded more ore with each pick.

But one model beat them all, the persistent vision of the man that humiliated him, Lévy-Ruhlmann, sad knight of the Adam's apple. Unlike the hatred of Pressensé and Aboudaram, that of men who loved money and had lost, this was a hatred of the eggs that hatched the breed of Lévy-Ruhlmann. Stéphane never regretted the lost money. He lived and worked, that was enough. He gave no thought to next summer. Like a migratory bird, he was as sure as they that the fields would yield material for nest and stomach alike. He could not at first make out why so many of his sinister characters bore the stamp of Lévy-Ruhlmann. Why not Renouvier? He had not been a tenth as rich but still much too rich. But Renouvier had given him his opportunity, and only betrayed him as a business man. Renouvier, too, had a plodding mind, Lévy-Ruhlmann a really beautiful brain.

This isolated obsession with the brilliant rascality of Lévy-Ruhlmann was made one with current events in Stéphane's now impressionable spirit. That winter, France rang with social conflict, disasters, scandals and civil war. The sixth of February, 1934, galvanized all Frenchmen and cracked ivory towers with the earthquake tremors from social rift. The newly-roused, vivid imagination of Stéphane gathered past and present, rolled them together, fused by artistic heat, into bullets to be used against the powers of money.

In April, after the terrible winter gave laboured birth to an exquisite spring, a cantonal election was held at Nîmes. The reactionaries made gains. Nîmes is the city of hate, of hereditary fierce hate. It has always been the most extreme city in France. Its people are proverbial for their polished fanaticism. It is the capital of a district of communal dwellers fondling memories of the Roman *oppida*. It has maintained the sorry fame of their urban collisions. In religion and politics, it has never shown mercy. Its gay, luxurious, mocking population torn into lunatics on these two subjects. It is said of the Nîmois that they are like a madman: kind and reasonable on all subjects but two. Utter those magic words, religion, politics, and a strait jacket is required to bind the city. It is another city of seven hills, a theatre of bullfights, with remains of the Forum; in it, civil war is endemic.

On the night of the election, the Croix de Feu, the Jeunesses Patriotes, the Action Française groups, howled through the streets, brandishing white canes, and mercilessly assaulting the beaten following of the Left. They stamped about, crying their staccato yawns, "Death to the assassins, death to Daladier." Their flushed faces were those of the "gilded youth" of the French reaction after Thermidor; ungenerous, spoiled dependents, they begrudged the poor their bread and the powerful the sweets of office they hoped soon to savour. Pastor Guizot was an unflinching and active radical. They broke into his house maddened, combative, anarchic. They swaggered into his study. He cried to his God who was deaf. The sons of Belial, as Milton had it, beat the old man into insensibility and kept on slugging the unfeeling body. They smashed his desk, burned the papers on which he had spent his life, and then rushed upstairs. Stéphane came down to defend M. Guizot but the attack was so sudden that by the time he arrived the cock-a-hoop ruffians were preparing to mount the stairs. Dozens of them came battering their way to Stéphane's studio. When they saw Simone they tried

to assault her (she must be the pastor's daughter and he couldn't complain), but she turned the kitchen into a fortress and hurled carving knives, so that the pimpled chivalry retreated.

Stéphane fought them with all his ploughman strength, but the weight of numbers was such that he was soon down, trampled on, and at last one cavalier put his heel in his mouth and turned the boot. They fell with joy on his canvases and ripped them to pieces. The labour of six months went in as many minutes. The tardy arrival of the *gardes républicaines* caused a hurried exit and Simone was left to nurse the two victims of idealism.

Only four paintings were saved. They were those of the Lévy-Ruhlmann series. Packed in the kitchen, they were saved along with Simone by her superb resistance. Her own work was gone. Stéphane took days to recover, and his mouth hurt for weeks. But the real blow was that, despite devoted attentions, Pastor Guizot died in a week.

It was the beginning of May. The horrified artists could not tolerate living in the city of hate, blood, heat and reaction. They were driven to seek a cool countryside and they picked the nearest, the slopes of the bald Mont Ventoux. They carried with them the four Lévy-Ruhlmann paintings they both thought masterpieces. All else was gone, even little sketch books, even their supplies. Stéphane was sad, but it was for the upright Guizot, not for his own lost labours.

*St. John's Fires*

THEY arrived at Carpentras two days before the St. John's festival, the day of greatest rejoicing in Provence, as in the Nuremberg of *Die Meistersinger*. The rich countryside, land of exotic fruits and fat, green, fine vegetables, now sweated wealth. Active pigs grunted for truffles. Chestnut and oak were immense and full-leaved.

The lovers established themselves near the town. From their cabin they could see its impressive bell tower. Above them was the prodigious mass of the Mont Ventoux which reduced them to toys. For the first days they gorged themselves with the celebrated strawberries of the town, those idols of Paris connoisseurs, which are carried about in cunningly fashioned baskets with near-religious ecstasy. Such a surfeit of flavour, and the view of a happy, industrious, competent and refined peasantry, did something to diminish the recent bitter memories.

Stéphane, though, was haunted by Guizot, the just man sacrificed to the invincible hate of the ungenerous. "There was a power in that man that was extraordinary. His craze for logic, his four-square ship of heaven, was a pilotship to me. Simone, we are too liberal. We are soft because we have no idea of where to go. I am sure he is perfectly snug in his narrow home. It is cramped but definite. I need his fiery purpose. Who will give it to me?"

Simone rose pale. "My God, do you mean to say then that from my love you get no fire? Stéphane, then what's the use of it? Stéphane, that is what I mean to you, isn't it?"

"Simone, dearest, quiet. You have given me fire, force. See what I was when I came to you, see how I have painted passionately, ever so much more knowingly, since I touched your dear hand. But truth! I don't know enough; I see with one eye. Why, I wonder? I remember, when I was a little boy, my father preached that when Jesus was in doubt he went from the plain to the mountain and all was made clear. Perhaps the rich cities of the lowlands and even the lands that hug the sea are no good for rare thoughts.

To-morrow, let's go to the naked Mont Ventoux, to the very summit. There we ought to stay until we are purged of the crowded hot ideas of the human beehives."

"It takes a mountain to do what I cannot!" she spoke loud, waving her hands. "Me? I am nothing, a cook, a laundress, an audience, in short a servant and a strumpet. I am all holes, heat, fluid, bumps. That's darning, cooking and sex. Well no, my priggish friend with long speeches, I don't hear you telling me how you need other ideals when you paw all over me when we are half asleep. I'm all you need then. And I won't be there any longer. It's over, understood."

"I do not understand," Stéphane said deliberately, "or rather I do. I am tired of your thousand tantrums. I am tired of your permanent ultimatums. I am sick at heart of your vanity. No one can be as important as you think yourself. Damn it, end your fishwives' harangues. End them now. I am a working man, can you understand *that*? Not a ham actor, not a poseur. The devil take your petty-cash-nourished artistic temperament. And no mistake about it." Simone was taut at this unexpected attack. She was about to surrender. Then Stéphane broke the charm. Having impressed her, he rushed to kiss her fiercely.

No son of France was ever more passionate. He covered the neck of the wilful girl with short, wild kisses. She was content. Her outbursts were profitable. They served their simple purpose.

"Get up, Stéphane, my own. I am crazed by too much love. I am ashamed." She soothed him in the time-honoured style of the faithful girl, she stroked his hair as his head lay in her lap. "I am a cupbearer to a god, I dread his anger."

Stéphane feared this heightened speech. It was so artificial, so unlike the plain speech of everyday men and women. He felt like a weak vessel, a silly woman's plaything, listening to this strained yet dead language. But then Simone was strange, rare. These outbursts, these tragi-comic breaks, had to occur. Their life was a succession of storms and calms, but it was worth it.

The next day they began their climb to the observatory of Mont Ventoux, six thousand, three hundred feet above the Rhône. It was an uninviting slope but not too difficult to scale. The mountain rose sheer from the plain of Provence. It was of the order of Mount Etna though not so beautiful nor so high. It is the sentinel of the Alps, the last western mountain of the great backbone of Europe.

They took their time. At every level, they turned to see the unfolding panorama. They vied with each other in moving fingers pointing to this or that recognizable city, river, mountain; they glued their eyes on the multiple shades of olive fields, chestnut groves, plane- or poplar-lined national roads, limestone gullies, micaceous fields, Jurassic plateaux, the slowly fusing shades of vegetable garden and orchard, of meadow and swamp. Canyons that were clean-cut became vague and then a gentle tracery, rivers filled with rapids looked smoother, the smiling city of Avignon changed from a papal fortress into a child's counterpane decoration. New cities emerged on the horizon, plains grew flatter at the base as mountain ranges were born in the distance.

They reached the top of the mountain near dusk. The observatory was closed, the faithful staff were at dinner. Their table, seen through the windows, was a mess of bread, red-wine bottles, maps, charts, sausages. Such is the setting of students of the upper air. Simone and Stéphane would not disturb them. They settled their rucksacks on a rounded rock two hundred feet away.

The skies of fair Provence began their intense, beautiful evening competition. The constellations came up and thickened the heavens, but the lingering tones of daylight, diverse, warm, some opal dominant in the west, deep green in the south towards the Mediterranean, held off the black invader, struggled against him, interpenetrated his dark tones. Until the heat of the day was gone on the plain, until the stars shook off the nervous fringe of light and swarmed happily in the circumambient deep darkness, it was near midnight. Their population, seen from the Mont Ventoux, were bent as in a planisphere, a quarter-moon alone disputed their empire.

As darkness became absolute, the lights of St. John's Eve appeared all over Provence. From a thousand hills and hillocks, the beacons blazed. Every town was lighted up, a kind of Roman candle flicked the dark valleys. Sputtering lights kept going for hours, strung along the riverside. Processions could be seen by their torches winding through the near-by cities of Avignon, Carpentras, Vaucluse, and divined as far off as Arles and Tarascon. Even the savage peaks of the grim lower Alps were studded with St. John's lights from mountain cabins. The country was alive with the lights until midnight.

Simone and Stéphane watched from the mountain top, cold, alone, enchanted, overwhelmed. They clung together. They fancied they heard the bands going through the villages, the dance



of the apprentices as in opera. Coloured lights covered the plain. The fireworks were elaborate. Jets and sprays abounded. Avignon, the Jerusalem of Provence, was completely light. The Palace of the Popes, that stupendous pile, seemed to them a sharply engraved, brilliant postage stamp. The lights did not die until two in the morning. Then it was bitterly cold and the swarmed stars did effortlessly what the men in the valleys had done for only a few hours. In the cold, Simone hugged Stéphane. They sang, or rather hummed, for the cold filled the opened mouths. Yet, as the cold advanced, their animal warmths were wanting. They nearly froze. They had, as Simone chattered, escaped the hate and heat of Nîmes, that was sure. She got up and danced for warmth.

She liked it and danced still more, her steps quick, then faster. At last a tarantella emerged. She became hot, stripped her clothing on that icy summit and danced naked. Stéphane did not stop her. He was amazed at her ever-changing form, dimly outlined, swirling about. It was Simone Lamouroux, she who took no one's advice, his original, his love.

Across his fully occupied sight, her body moved unceasingly. Her tom-tom hum as she danced was slower than her steps. She hummed then a bolero tempo but speeded as a dervish. She stopped suddenly, as a gipsy does, bent over him laughing, held her hands out to push him away, bent back, giggled insanely, overlong. Her too much exercised limbs glistened with sweat in that dangerous arctic air.

The visions he had painted that taxing winter, jeering monsters, grotesques in a chiaroscuro, were pale compared to his own possessed woman in a darkness beyond plausible paint. He must dance with his own fiend, his own love gone wild. They must own the same frenzy. Their dance on the mountain top was interrupted by gleams of dawn, when Simone stopped short and hastily dressed. She huddled again, for warmth, against Stéphane and fell exhausted into a tossing sleep in which she cried and screamed and pushed away enemies, but never woke.

Overwrought all winter, the Calvinist terror, the assault of reaction, the painting of cunning, tortured, erudite symbols, the rapid turn of events, quarrels and scenes, the arduous climb, the overpowering fantasy of St. John's lights which took out her eyes and inflamed her imaginings, the dread cold, and her infuriated steps, these all combined against her. She was sick. Her head ached;

her heart palpitated; she coughed deeply, strong as she was. Her resources, apparently unlimited, gave out. The beautiful face was overlaid with care, for the first time. The refined Hellenism tightened, first sign that she was no longer a girl.

She awoke at ten o'clock. Her look was joyless. She had given too much. Her passions had gone off into thin air carrying with them sections of her tributary body. So she felt. So the insistent dream that had worn her, told her. "He came with modesty and spoke formally. He harnessed your enthusiasms. His great flame is fed by a slow crackling limb, yours by the Greek fire. You are unlike, yet you follow in all he does. He wants the mountain top and you are there. Live for yourself, lost girl."

The voice stopped and she saw Stéphane as an oak tree, sturdy, drawing food for roots from all about it, determined to outlive every object on which it gazed. A golden bowl was presented to Simone in which were all the images she had created. Her eyes were dipped into the bowl and mixed with them and made one. There was no split between her sight and its objects. She saw artists floating about; they saw the world from the dark spaces of their unseen face; to discover what they looked like, they flourished ivory hand mirrors. She was fused and they were mysterious. She saw hordes of painters climbing into Parnassus on stilts whose tops were brushes. They wore beige or sepia blouses, whereas she wore scarlet.

She thought of the dream and was miserable. Stéphane had rambled off and, as he came back, she knew she could stand her secondary life no longer. The dream compelled her. The overwrought girl jumped off the rock, threw her rucksack at her lover, then slung it over her back, and mournfully called, "Good-bye."

Stéphane knew she was ill, but it took him a moment to realize that the stillness and beauty of the morning found no answer in her. He tried to stop her, she kept on descending the path. He cried, she was deaf. He played the man and made a brutal mistake. He struck her fullface to shock her back into sense, or at least, rest. Terrified, she fled down the mountain, scrambling, sliding down dangerous inclines, leaping from rock to rock. Her exaltation gave her a sure footing, and she was soon out of sight.

He cried after her, hallooed down the clefts, descended down three of them, suspended by his rope, called out, "Simone," to the unanswering rocks, barely caught footing, and at last arrived

haggard at the base, looked for her everywhere, scampered around the countryside for any clue, and followed the most frivolous. He stayed at their cabin only to rest, but in a few days he knew she was gone and that he must work sad and alone. He tried to paint but his tragedy was untranslatable.

Simone was as good as dead, her wonderful soul had been too rich for marriage. But Stéphane saw some things aright. "Were she fat with child, a growing being kicking inside of her, her furies would be calmed. Fool that I am! Why didn't I give her a woman's life? Why do I listen to words and not to the unspoken language of the heart?"

*Raven versus Colibri*

"SHE's as pompous, fat and important as her grandmother," Cécile insulted her new-born baby, who was sucking the colostrum from her mother's small nipples.

"She looks insultingly prosperous for three days old," the doctor agreed, "but then she sucks a silver spoon in her spare time. Mme Sabatier, I must congratulate you, I have never seen a person as small as you deliver so easily. You do not realize that under the anæsthetic you sang catches, where most patients deliver high hysterical speeches. You must be very happy, naturally happy."

Cécile looked cheerfully at the family doctor; her voice seemed to bounce from her large pillow.

"Why, of course, Doctor. I had the gayest father on earth. I married a fellow that's been my darling since I was a tiny girl. He has proved as good as I expected. I am rich; I am hated by only two people, and that's mighty few for a mortal. So why not laugh?"

"You seem to be in a dreadful hurry to keep the strain going. Let me see, the young lady was born two hundred and eighty-one days after your wedding, ten lunar months plus one day. Do you propose to keep this up, Madame?"

"The first twenty-five won't be difficult." Cécile was grave. "But after that I should have some trouble. And Doctor," she spoke slyly, for he was a leader of that party, "they would be lower middle class and have to vote Radical Socialist."

"Oh be quiet, Mme Sabatier, you've laughed at me every time about my respectable politics and I shall put you under ether if you chatter more about anything. After all, you are as tiny as a miniature, as finely strung as a lavalère. You must rest. A childbed is not a café, though it is hard for Denys Renouvier's daughter to suspect anything else."

The doctor retired. Gisèle came as Cécile dozed. Despite the solemn orders of Rashi-Mordecai to stay away, she was a sister and

one who sneakingly loved Cécile. She stroked her eyelids and woke her up.

"Gisèle, you here? Oh dear sister, I am so glad." They kissed for a long time. Both clattered. "Have you seen the baby?" Cécile asked. "We are calling her after one of Mamma's spurious ancestors, Solange. It's so Gothic and so parvenu. But the baby's pretty, don't you think so? It deserves a better name."

"It's awfully pretty and fat," Gisèle was in accord.

"Weighed eight and a half pounds from a mummy weighing one hundred and five." Cécile purred. "The Renouvier show is going on in the female line. By the by, there is a chance in the other side, too. Since Jacques came into his inheritance he became aggressive, have you heard?"

"No, Cécile, I am in Mantua carefully protected from my own family. What news?"

"He is marrying six million francs. All of it. In cash. It is tied by a blue ribbon to Julie de Crommelynck. You know her father?"

"Who doesn't! He owns about half of Antwerp, doesn't he?"

"He's welcome to it. Jacques writes me that they have a pompous twenty-five-room mansion on the Chaussée de Malines in that dull, mercantile town, and that they sit and look at each other for two hours, for they are posing for a Dutch family portrait all their life. Incidentally they drink chocolate."

"They can't be more pompous than the Ottolenghi hordes at Mantua. Oh dear Cécile, I lead the dullest life imaginable, as you the gayest. What a bore! Rashi-Mordecai is a Fascist leader now, struts about in a black shirt. I think he sleeps with his arm outstretched. I really don't know, he doesn't seem to know where my bedroom is, either."

"Gisèle, when are you going to have a baby?"

"Never, never." Gisèle didn't cry, she was bitter. It was a new thing for Cécile to see her old pillow warrior in this dark mood. "Never, never. The doctor says I'm all right, but this husband of mine! Racked by some disease or other. I ask no questions, what's the use? Sister," she cried, "you'll have to have all my babies for me."

Cécile tried to turn the subject. "Have you heard from Foulques lately?"

Gisèle pretended to be interested; she really thanked her sister

for her consideration. "No. I read in the society columns, though, that he has been seen about with the Honourable Diana Creighton. She's the daughter of some marquess, I believe connected with some financial scandal. I hope he gets some money, they can't be in love. After all, she can't love a vacuum, and what else is there to Foulques?"

"Oh, I don't know. Look at how happy two idiots like Onésime and I have proved to be. But tell me, Gisèle, apart from your disappointment about a baby, are you happy with Rashi-Mordecai? Is he kind?"

"Cécile, ask nothing. I came here to rejoice with you, to kiss my niece. I have to return in a few days and I am miserable. In a week we take on Italian nationality, we are being ennobled. I will soon be the Contessa di Colmaro. You realize we are moving to Rome, Rashi-Mordecai is taking a villa at Terni. He expects to be intimate with the Duce. Then you will rarely see me. We will have to meet Roman high society all the time. You know, most of their ladies are Americans. Why not a few packing-house fortunes? I am going to an abattoir."

Gisèle recovered her poise and continued, "Cécile, I have told you nothing. Guard your husband, child and fortune. Lévy-Ruhlmann radiates intelligence. Why is my husband a fool? The old man's appetites for plotting, his ingenuity, his mental resources are so great that he had nothing left for his children. He has consumed three generations in his mind. He is dangerous and marvellous in combinations. But there is one thing he hasn't reckoned yet, and that's family unity. I will never send on my proxy against you. I have refused. Guard my fortune too, Cécile, I dread them."

They embraced again. Gisèle left. As she reached the door and stepped into the hall, she flew back and kissed Cécile once more. "Cécile, live well, cherish Onésime, I am so unhappy." She met Onésime in the hall; he was surprised at her cordiality.

When he entered, Cécile was asleep again. Onésime waited for a long time. He was reflective. For a committee was just authorized by the courts to investigate the "alleged irregularities of the stewardship of M. Onésime Sabatier." It was demanded by an outraged, innocent, minority shareholder, the lamb, the chickadee, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. He charged malversations of no less than twenty million francs. The preventive arrest of M. Onésime Sabatier alone could protect him. This was denied, but he had appealed.

Onésime was fast on the trigger. As minority shareholder in the

Lévy-Ruhlmann companies, he charged wholesale fraud, forgery, arson in the case of the *Lucie de Lamoille*, conspiracy to intercept an insurance binder on its way to Lloyd's, and asked the procurator of the Republic at Marseille to clamp its richest citizen into a cell, forthwith, or else the property of the Renouviers was imperilled.

Denied. M. François Renouvier also sued M. Onésime Sabatier, on his own account, for criminal libel. His father-in-law was sane enough to abstain from this.

Onésime spoke quietly to Cécile as she awoke. "How's the fourth day, sweetheart?"

"Oh, glorious," she touched his cheeks quietly, "glorious. Poor Gisèle. Papa sold her to a sick, ponderous chap, sterile too. She's miserable. I'm so glad we married for love. So glad." Then she laughed, "You're not sterile like that Verdun hero. Make Frenchmen, my beloved, make Frenchmen. We'll beat the Germans in the lying-in hospital. That's the real battlefield of nations! And how you know it, you lustful monster." She embraced him delightedly. "I'm in fine fettle to-day. Any more cannonading from the sour general at Fort Marseille?"

"No, adjutant, none. But I have been busy. I don't want to trouble you with details, but he is slipping on a soaped staircase, into a bucket of hot water, garnished with bichloride of mercury. If he escapes that, a tart with cyanide of potassium is waiting for him, his bath powder is dusted with arsenic, his razor polished with tetanus. Cholera morbus is dipped on his toilet paper, or in other words you know," he winked, "I am making him uncomfortable." So the two merry-makers went into piled exaggerations, throwing imaginary darts at their hated enemy.

In the countinghouse at Marseille, the raven sat, twiddling his favourite flower, cassidony, smelling it, speculating in cash and on ideas. He was afraid of no one except Cécile. He had beaten all and sundry, the oversubtle Pressensé, the forward Sabatier, got a potentate like Denys Renouvier in his net, but against this tiny opponent he was disarmed. "So little yet she has coaxed control of the Renouvier fortune out of my hands!"

He looked out on the Cannebière. Three pretty *lycée* girls were crossing by skipping steps, escorted by a happy gendarme, his whiskers titillating at this most pleasant duty. One of the girls resembled Cécile. The rich man was put off for the day.

"She has begun a family as I when young." He was worried.

"I am through, I have created sixteen. She begins and it is I, an old man, who oppose her? What am I backing? My sterile son, Rashi-Mordecai? That squeaking puppet whose importance and flavour are of my own making? My daughter Adèle? Married to an ass, or rather a mule, she has no progeny. What for? I have my Kaddish, if my snob son should remember to praise his God on the anniversary of my death. Strange, in our religion, the death of the father is the occasion for the glorification of God. By way of bending to His will?" He peered out again; the girls had turned the corner. He felt better, drank a bit of cognac.

He looked at a pot of cyclamens. His office was always a florist's home. He also carefully brought in plants that produced hay fever when sensitive competitors called for an interview. "I should stock perennials instead of annuals." He felt for a grip on eternity. "They endure." He hesitated. "She has begun to have children where I have stopped breeding."

The family man, whose fortune was a part of his household, whose wealth was inconceivable apart from his tribe, looked into space.

"Why do I fight any more? Sixty-five! Born on the terrible day of Sedan when we lost our fatherland. Time to quit, two is my unlucky number, 65, six and five, eleven, that is, made up of one, one, or, that's two. The wrong time, the wrong figure. Wait, 1935, that's eighteen added, one, eight, that's nine, my death number. My age unlucky, combined with the year of death? Wait."

Even superstition calculates, checks up. "Wait, has that happened before?" He scribbled all the years since 1870 that added to 9. In 1872, the age was two, the year added up to nine! "I hovered, they tell me, four months between life and death. In 1881, I was eleven, one, one, that's two, that was the year of small-pox. In 1890, marriage year, count that as one will. In 1899, two children died, 1908, two more died, 1917, my parents killed at bombardment of Colmar, 1926, why nothing very serious happened in that year! Why nothing, it's mere superstition," he consoled himself.

The result, of course, was that he worked out the numerology of his name. That came to death in 1935. He added up the number equivalents of Cécile, they were nil, zero. Good. He started a game of solitaire and the first cards looked bad; he reshuffled the pack and they came out fairly bad, but, praise be, not fatal.



Lévy-Ruhmann despised palmistry and astrology but number sequences kept this economic man fascinated. He sighed, "They point to misfortune but none to certain tragedy." He put out his long hands and toyed with an ivory abacus presented to him by Canton correspondents. He idly calculated, his random figures came to nine. He stopped, dismayed.

He reviewed his children. Five younger sons: Jonathan, Elie, Moïse, David, Hillel; five younger daughters: Séraphine, Deborah, Judith, Elizabeth, Renée. All of no importance, none with the vivacity and precocity of Cécile. "All softies, wafted to futility on gusts of money." Why not break the whole situation, adopt Cécile and Onésime, leave them an aliquot part of his fortune, for who else could guard the scattered estate once he was gone?

Why continue the suicidal fight? The interests in Liverpool had joined with the Dutch monopoly; a world-famed firm of London merchants in ground nuts and seed had just failed. Who could dispute the empire of copra, palm, olive, seeds? "I have a milliard francs, they have colonies. What is Nigeria but one of them? Or the Gold Coast? Or Sierra Leone? Mere departments of that empire. What have I got? A corrupt official on the Ivory Coast, a crook or two in Indo-China, a thief at La Réunion? A clove smuggler at Zanzibar?" Why not sell out while the selling was good instead of trying to control the Renouvier wine trade as well?

Onésime and Cécile little suspected that their opponent was weakening, that his Adam's apple fluctuated with self-analysis, reproaches and philosophic questions. Philosophy, always the first mark of defeat!

Lévy-Ruhmann peered out at the Cannebière again, the three *lycée* girls were returning, the one that looked like Cécile was impossibly gay. It made him nervous. He went downstairs, fell back in his walnut-garished Daimler saloon car, put his hands on the corded-silk wrist rest, watched the strings of lights along the avenues with mesmeric attention. He was as fixed as a cataleptic. He next found himself in bed. Something had happened after that for an aphasia endured for weeks.

## *The Hammam*

MELCHIOR ABOUDARAM was impatient to go to the Turkish bath. He felt that he could not free himself of the jail stain unless it were washed out in the luxurious setting of a hammam. From his boyhood the Turkish bath had been his delight. His father went there three times a week.

In the Turkish bath the young Melchior Aboudaram had heard long recitals, analogous to *The Arabian Nights* and *The Perfumed Garden*; there his passions were quickened as the long-bodied Berbers and Arabs described the joys of love. There the avid Jew tasted luxury, ease, folly, crime, conspiracy. His father rejoiced at his early desires, but still, compelled him to await his thirteenth birthday before taking him to women. Confirmation preceded indulgence.

Melchior had passed from the long neurotic songs in the pleasure-houses of Tunis to the more depraved and vulgar pleasures of Marseille. This made him cling all the harder to the hammam as his refuge of Oriental living, opposed to the gross existence of Europeans. He was offended by the bigger skeletons of Frenchmen and still larger races. He missed the svelte young men of the desert. Amid the warmth of the baths, it was delicate to look on exquisite ephebes; in the massage, it was superb to be scrubbed by monstrous Nubians, not by the unemployed amateurs of the old port at Marseille.

Pressensé received his constant requests for money for the baths. He saw that there Aboudaram would be caressed into unconsciousness and agree to foolish actions. One pleasant July day, therefore, the three cavern brigands trotted off to the Moorish-decorated hammam.

They lazily noted the American flag floating over all government buildings. Neither Fabre nor Aboudaram knew anything about Lafayette or why the Fourth of July is publicly celebrated in America's sister democracy.

"Lafayette is a perfect example of a good investment," Pressensé moralized. "That Auvergnat nitwit wanted to even accounts-with the English. He liked adventure. To-day he would be a Gerbault and go round the world in a rowing-boat. On account of this silly lad we just involved the Americans for a two-year war and a cost of thirty thousand million dollars. And so we thank them for it? No, we will go on presenting the Lafayette bill for a thousand years. No matter how often they pay the debt, we can always say, 'Without us you would be England's colonies, please pay.' Permanent moral blackmail pays more than malicious blackmail. That's how we have to get this Lévy-Ruhlmann. Make him pay us for some alleged benefit we will confer on him. Now, I am told, his enemy is Onésime Sabatier and his wife. Same family crosses his path twice. Why not help him crack them a bit criminally? Then we would have the goods on him, while he would have an added estate, the wine kingdom. After that, when we even accounts, our prize will be all the fatter."

Pressensé was still immersed in his dream of commercial domination, Aboudaram thought only of personal vengeance. If he would be a pauper after he ruined Lévy-Ruhlmann, he would be pleased. Athanase Fabre listened to both unmoved. He was up to a million francs, when he got up to five millions he would clear out. He didn't care who achieved what objects, as long as he achieved his church career.

So the three disparate rascals arrived at the hammam. They deposited their valuables in private boxes, Aboudaram five francs, Fabre one million (one thousand thousand-franc notes; it was always on his priestly person), and Pressensé, a bank book with the name of the bank covered over in smeared heavy black ink. No one would ever get anything on him or be able to attach an account.

To their surprise, Lévy-Ruhlmann was there, near the pool, sipping a lemonade and reading *The Economist* of London.

He saw them in the rear with a rabbit's eyes. He was over his aphasia and seemed fitter than ever. His scrawny neck and goitre eyes moved around, and the aquiline sneer fattened his nose.

"Good morning, M. de Pressensé, I had no idea you were still in Marseille. Oh Melchior, good morning. I was really sorry for your misfortune. It was not I that complained. I had an insurance policy, I applied for indemnification when I lost the statuette you took. That was foolish, I didn't know the policy required them to

prosecute once they paid a loss. While you were in jail, I tried repeatedly to have your sentence commuted. You can check me up on that. Call at my office some day, I have an opportunity for you, it will be profitable. Again my regrets for your year of sorrow. But I will lend a hand. *Kol Yisrōel Chaverim* (All Israel are brothers)," he said solemnly in the prosaic Ashkenazic accent of Alsace, so detested by Melchior.

"By the by, who is the third gentleman? May I?"

"I am Father Athanase Fabre of the diocese of Valence."

"A priest. Friend of your brother, I suppose," he said turning to M. de Pressensé. "I am enchanted. Good company, Melchior."

He went back to reading *The Economist*. His gaze, though, seemed to be directed from the back of his scrawny neck. He followed the three throughout the hammam. "Let's get to the first steam room quickly," said Melchior. "He has queered this pitch. I can see him looking at us straight through his gall."

They sat on the heated stones, the three uneasy men. Pressensé had a hairy belly, grey-haired, a curved spine; a hunchback, he sat, loving the heat that even Marseille in summer could not give his cold old bones. Athanase Fabre, minus robes, was exactly like Voltaire. He had skimped his flesh so, that his ribs looked like a relief map. He had buttocks long and hooked like skis, his bony toes were arranged in ten fanlike spikes, with variegated humps, all red. Altogether a fearful sight. Aboudaram, despite the year in jail, was fattened. He had a feminine curve in the back, plump hips, great fleshy hams, his rolls of fat gave his breast a gynecomastic outline. He had no biceps but fatty arms, soft and olive. His pudgy but small hands were the indices of wanton irresolution, but only when he was naked could their implication of soft character be made convincing.

"Speak softly," Pressensé counselled, "Lévy is the wizard of recording devices."

Just then, the steam came up and sizzed. It was difficult for any sound to penetrate.

"Melchior," whispered the mentor, "Melchior, so help me God, when I saw him to-night I gave up all ideas of destroying him to a profit. I wanted only to kill him. It is honest, direct, I am afraid it must be done."

"Nonsense," said Fabre, "you let yourself in for mortal sin, for eternal damnation. I am still your priest, gentlemen."

"Not mine, my dear fellow," Aboudaram said sharply, "so what practical suggestion have you?"

Fabre answered: "He should fall among thieves and be stripped of his goods. Death would give you pleasure but give him no pain. Loss of money, as pithy Shylock said, is worse than loss of life. Then I would have a chance to play the good Samaritan and redeem myself."

They looked to see if he laughed, but he kept a straight face. By this time their skins were singed, they smelled like fowls over a fire before their feathers have fallen. They traipsed into the next room, also fearfully hot, though less so, but where one could sit on a reclining chair, if he could survive it. There, as they expected, was Lévy-Ruhlmann, back from the diving-pool rotunda. He was reading the *Gazette du Palais*, with the criminal cases displayed.

They got up after three minutes and sat in the comparatively cool room, a mere hundred and forty degrees. There the modest Englishmen were covered with gingham aprons, but all the others were nude. They drank hot lemonade and hot raspberry drinks, and sweated themselves away. The heat was working on Aboudaram, and he whispered, "Why not kill him now, in the hot room, by a blow. He has had a stroke, everyone knows how foolhardy the man is to come to a hammam after a stroke. He will go down in the hissing of the steam, dead. It'll look perfect."

Then he whispered to Pressensé alone, "I am too flabby; have that skinny Fabre give him the *coup de grâce*. One smash of his natural brass knuckles and the chicken neck of that bastard will be stunned. Besides, your brother doesn't love this priest, let's get rid of him in any case."

"Later, later." Pressensé was prudent. "Perhaps yes, perhaps no. Lévy-Ruhlmann has camp followers here, of that you may be sure."

The three were ordered to the massaging stones. Before that, they went into the two-hundred-and-forty-degree room. Fabre and Pressensé shot out like torpedoes, but Melchior laved in it, he held out for ten minutes.

The three reclined on the stones. Buckets of hot water were poured over them; lather, soaped all over crazy broom brushes, was applied; mad scouring maniacs destroyed layers of epidermis. They were outstretched, their appendices punched, their gizzards

thumped, their thighs creased, their toes flexed. Turned on their abdomens, they tried to utter words to each other, but at that moment their manipulators, zealous for large tips, would turn them over like flapjacks and give them osteopathic stretches and massage the veins out of their courses. After they had been conducted to the douches to be soured in boiling and arctic waters, their murderous enthusiasms were diminished. After towelling they were happy to be robed in bath towels and recline, in a soft idle state, to take floury Arabian coffee and gaze upon the Moorish roof. They were also served the usual sweets, *baclava*, *halvah*, nougat and Turkish delight. Pressensé ordered Bulgarian rose-leaf jelly which Melchior devoured.

Aboudaram became wistful in memories. "What was the name of that fellow I served and who was ruined? Oh, yes, Sabatier. Have you ever heard of him? What is he doing?"

Pressensé spoke quietly, "I traced him, for it was he that really ruined me, Lévy-Ruhlmann merely finished the job. I have him on my list too. He may be poor now, but he must pay me. He is at Carpentras pretending to paint. My brother's diocesan officials have him covered, though they don't know why. What I don't know is if the painting is an act. He surely must have money. His brother married a Renouvier and they were thick with Lévy-Ruhlmann until recently. I have heard of some ugly lawsuits we can use. That makes me think that the fight between him, that is Stéphane, and Lévy-Ruhlmann was a hoax. It all fits in too snug."

"I don't know about its being an act," Melchior reflected softly. "I think he was really ruined and is drunk with troubles. How else can you explain a business man turning artist? There would be no purpose to such an act for, if he were sponging on his brother, he would lead the life of a remittance man at Cannes or Paris. Why paint? He's broke, punch drunk."

By this time Melchior, satisfied in his dreams, dipping Arabian coffee, tasting delights, had forgotten he had ever served in jail; he sympathized with Stéphane.

Lévy-Ruhlmann wafted them a fond farewell from the dressing booths. One minute later a detective came in and pointed to the three men, and asked, "Which of you is Aboudaram?"

Melchior answered nervously, "I, why?"

"Where is your card of identity?"

"I will get it in the robing-room."

"No excuses—you are required to produce it instantly on police demand."

"How can I in a hammam?"

"So you resist the law, argue with the police! Come along you cheap ex-convict. Sorry, gentlemen."

Melchior, who knew he was in an old-style frame-up said, "I am willing to come along. Would you permit me, Monsieur, to dress?"

"Yes, if I guard you."

Melchior dressed smilingly, so did the others. The worst that could happen would be a fine of twenty francs. For he could produce his card of identity.

When the three of them came to the safe-box room, the guard was not the same man. They handed him their keys. Aboudaram looked in the box, his five francs were intact, his card of identity was missing! That made Fabre extremely nervous. He looked in his box, his million francs, that had been sewed up in an innocent-looking cloth, were gone! He fainted to the floor. His smuggling efforts of months were wasted. His police cards too were missing. Pressensé, strangely enough, found everything intact. Why had filthy Lévy-Ruhlmann left him out? He must have found out the name of his bank. It must be that. He was in a cold sweat. All his money gone, attached by now on some bogus claim!

All three came to their senses at about the same time and asked, "Where is the other guard? The one that placed our valuables in the boxes?"

"Oh, Cyprien? He was on his last night here. He is a Neapolitan, you know. He told me he was glad to quit and buy a farm in the Campania."

"Italy," the three groaned. "The Italians never give up their subjects."

They were led away. Athanase Fabre, priest, was fined a hundred francs for nonpossession of his card. Melchior Aboudaram received a fine of five thousand francs and sixty days in city prison, for he was a former convict and his offence was more serious.

So ended the scheme of Pressensé for intoxicating his guard that they might be ready to get Lévy-Ruhlmann. The night of intoxication was ended before it had been fairly begun.

Fabre was ruined. Pressensé was not. The real reason for it

was that the crooked guard didn't think his bank book of any cash value and had reported to Lévy-Ruhlmann that there was nothing in his box. Fabre was insane with fury, murderous; again he was an economic dependent on Pressensé. Pressensé did not know whether to use him, wait for Melchior's release or inveigle Stéphane Sabatier as a decoy. He liked the last plan best.



*Simone Plays a Grandiose Fugue*

SIMONE sprang from the train and landed in the midst of a waiting family. Paris! She looked up and down the station to see the strange people. They were different from those of the Midi. Their women were in permanent mourning, apparently, for all wore black, or at least, drab tones. The sky was blue that day, but it was a rational blue, tainted by silver. The men were shorter than most Southerners, but among them were blonds, perhaps Normans; these were taller. The porters were small, underweight, nervous, speeded-up, wholly unlike the familiar porters in the South or the vociferous ones special to Marseille.

The city radiated nervousness; whether it was atmospheric pressure or mere size, or just noise, was difficult to determine. Perhaps it was due to so many articulate competitors watching thousands of human, cultural rivals at once.

She had almost nothing with her, she had also almost no money. Her aim was Montparnasse. There she (undoubtedly the most superb natural artist extant) would find a theatre comparable to her possibilities. She took the tram to the Boulevard du Montparnasse. It ambled quietly. Trams had been condemned by the aldermen. It was doomed and so it had a hearse's ambitions.

The conductor was quick-spoken, slid all consonants, vowels, diphthongs, into one elided click. Was this French? The initial view over the Pont d'Austerlitz was striking, the Column of the Bastille, Notre-Dame and the Jardin des Plantes were bunched around canal and river. Then began the desolate avenues appropriately alongside the insane asylum, the Salpêtrière, after that a ramshackle boulevard, St. Marcel, behind which were great warrens of paupers. A dust storm was coming up. The tram passed over decaying streets under viaducts, the fearful Bièvre, the haunting horrors of the Rue Broca. It was Paris of *Les Misérables*, Paris of the sick Catholic fancies of Huysmans. Where was that beautiful city? Miles had passed and it moved from slum to warehouse, from soulless apartment house to

long-neglected walls devoted to the everlasting inscription: POST NO BILLS, LAW OF JULY 29, 1881.

At last at the Observatoire, the harmonious composition so dear to tourists struck the discouraged girl. It scarcely roused her.

The tram rattled down the next three streets full of houses like those that were the disgrace of Sète, shabby stores; a neglected, unfinished-looking area. This was Montparnasse, capital of art.

No greater treason to beauty have my amazed eyes yet seen, she thought. Opposite her was the inscription, LE DÔME, the café that had been the headquarters of Henri Matisse, of Othon Friesz, of the Pleiad of modern art! What stellar beauties must be there!

It was an ordinary, large, dirty café, no better nor worse than dozens of others at Marseille, that is, those of the second order. It was full of foreigners. The *garçons* were businesslike. The coffee was undistinguished, so were the pastries. The boulevard was inhabited by dreary housewives, without Southern bravura, and by a strange collection of wall-eyed people who kept on passing and repassing the café, to a weariness of the flesh, and searching, with strained mendicant glance, some crony or victim that might stand them a drink or, better luck still, a dish. Some Americans were engaged in a loud dispute. It was in a sharp English and Simone, mining with the forgotten tools of the *lycée*, extracted from it some nuggets of æsthetics.

She left the café determined to end it all. No wonder so many people killed themselves in this city. It didn't even look large, just nasty. Why was the damned sky so leaden? What weighed on it? Why were all the houses in grey stone? Why grey? Grey? Grey? The question kept on circling. Why grey? She was faint from this Northern scene. The Romans must have been insane to pursue the Gauls into these sad landscapes. Leave the Bay of Naples for this?

She counted her last resources. All around her were joyless hotels. She blundered into a tenement courtyard; there she came upon the Montparnasse Cemetery. Why a wretched abode of the living when the homes of the dead were so sumptuous, artistic, arboreal, and even more cheerful? Here in the North life was a mistake.

Down the rotten-wrecked Rue du Montparnasse, she saw mean hotels, wretched trollops before them. They were as poor as the

meanest at Marseille; they did not have the animal verve of their meridional sisters. At the end of the street was the hideous basilica of Notre-Dame-des-Champs, a mortuary monument in architecture, with a formal campanile, absolutely tasteless. Daughter of Arles, where have you come? Child of the sun, this is the realm of the enemy. Ahriman sits here and breeds desolation. She could not keep from walking. She came upon the Boulevard Raspail, its thin trees fighting the petrol fumes for survival. Across a dark grey, gloomy house was the inscription: *VOX CLAMANTIS IN DESERTO*. Yes, yes, a voice cries in the wilderness, the voice of Simone, who had come for life. "Venus of Arles, no wonder they jailed you in the Louvre." For the dead Venus they found a palace, for the living beauty of Arles where will these Northern folk find a home? Simone saw the stretch of the characterless Rue de Rennes. She fled from it, discouraged. Everything was wrong, it was grey, formal, dying.

Her fever rose, she hardly breathed in the close city. How had anyone ever painted here? Why did they speak of this city with a new light in their eyes, a new heightening and warmth in their tones? Was it a collective illusion due to worship of power and wealth?

She was soon made ill. She saw a dingy paintings shop, hidden away beside a Bohemian-style restaurant, Rosalie's, in a street of tenements and studios, restaurants and shabby courts. It was the Rue Campagne-Première, Gehenna of the arts.

Exhausted, she stepped into the shop. A kindly old lady, certainly eighty, came out with a great-granddaughter, the image of Simone.

"Madame," Simone said faintly, "I am exhausted and ill, could I just sit down in your shop, take off my shoes, sleep?"

"Certainly. You are from the South?"

"From Arles, Madame."

"We are from Toulon. My name is Arlette Joyeux, this is my great-granddaughter, Simone."

The senior Simone, placed in a large, dusty, velvet Louis XV chair, half asleep, said gently, "I am happy to be with my own folk."

Simone slept for a little while, and woke up stretching, while the little girl, she discovered, was busy with a large bowl of hot water. She looked down and saw that the youngster had gently got off her

shoes and stockings, but so delicately that she had not even suspected it. The little Simone insisted on bathing her feet, on rubbing them with an aromatic analgesic ointment, after she had made a careful lathering of marigold soap. She smiled and hummed as she served their guest. She tried to lullaby the great lady to sleep as though she were the mother. "*Fais dodo, Colas*," she sang, to which Simone Lamouroux laughed, "*Avec mes bas de laine? Pas devant toi, marraine*." They continued catches of parodies on *En passant par la Lorraine* in far-fetched juvenile doggerel.

"What a surprise to see a little girl so like me and also named Simone."

"I'm not a little girl," the child said. "I am Simone Joyeux, I am talented, twelve, I have a soul like Marie Bashkirtsev."

"All in one breath," smiled Simone, engaged by the unusual youngster. "But some details of your life and interests were not included."

"I warn you, Madame, not to make fun of me. Everybody does, everybody annoys me, I am too fine for this world. I left the École Alsacienne because they were all gross. Professors, girls, none had the detail, distinction, refinement I have, for I have steeped myself in the repertoire of Italian primitives. I like their sad, unsubtle, icon cheeks. Do you know painting, Madame?"

"All at twelve, this is amazing."

"What were you at twelve, Madame, a fool like the others?"

"No, Simone. My name is Simone, too, Lamouroux, aren't we much the same girl?"

"We have much the same face," said the youngster exploringly, "the same Provençal face. But Madame, you are beautiful, insanely beautiful. Oh, forgive me, I did not see it at first, I was so vain. You must be the perfect Arlésienne my parents rave about. Oh let me kiss your hand, Madame, you are beauty itself. I must." The amazing girl kissed her. Simone allowed it. This sensitive child, born priestess of beauty and taste, was rare.

"All this won't feed Mada—Mademoiselle," the old lady said, looking at Simone's hands. "We are extremely poor but you can have a porridge with us. It's an English food made of oats, very interesting for us poor people. Their artists gave us some. Or, perhaps you would want pancakes of buckwheat. We cover it with margarine, you would not mind?"

"No, a thousand thanks, Madame."

Simone looked over the shop, crowded with canvases, most of them good. She looked at the sensitive child; it was her own face, self-confidence, spirit. This made Simone sweet. She was one of several. Nature makes replicas even of the unusual.

After the poor food, the old lady and the girl went to the back of the shop to sleep on an immense rickety double bed. Simone was to sleep on a sofa, or rather chaise longue, of the Tallien epoch. Lights were extinguished at eight o'clock. Electricity costs money.

Simone slept soundly, but she had long conversations with the really social pictures. A Modigliani looked at her, a long lady in his wistful, economical style, and smiled. "Glad to welcome you to our pensioners. Mme Joyeux has a new lodger, fellow canvases. Oh but we eat so little here, look at me, all my life I must be a Modigliani, I must forever be thin. It is dreadful. They had me next to a glutton of Renoir. I could have bitten her fat pink behind for nourishment. Mademoiselle," she spoke despairingly to Simone, "do not let them sell me to the home of a rich American. There I would forever languish from hunger on the walls of their dining-room. Oh it is more than egg and paint could stand!"

"You, hungry?" growled a tiger of Henri-Rousseau. "You, hungry? Look at me. My nature craves movement and changing sunlight, babies' heads. What does this amateur painter do? Fixes me in spiky grasses like a customs barrier. Why? Because he was a customs official. It's confining, it's mean. Oh that I had the good fortune to be painted by a real hunter, a man of wide spaces. But an *octroi* tiger! God help me." So the canvases spoke. At first, each had the floor, then they contradicted each other, one at a time.

A sombre laugh proceeded from a cracked, dark picture in the corner. Its blackish tree looked with love upon a nymph. "Vulgar children of the light, you are bad photographs. Look at me, I am the authentic tree, my master, Corot, spat at your garish hues with dark paints. I am content. I am impenetrable."

"You sombre snob," spoke up a clump of trees from Barbizon. "You with your mistress, a solitary nymph! Look at me. Unless I am seen by peasants at work, I feel small, bourgeois. How can trees be bourgeois? Have you no commonalty, you carefully tended elegant affair of Ville d'Avray? My master, Millet, spoke clean, I love him. I know that my redeemer liveth, he will be a curator in the prairie states in America." That popular painting was dogmatic.

The whole shop set up howls. "Shut up, you Continentals, and keep order," said the John Bull, a beefy gentleman of Sir John Lavery.

"Imagine French paintings, our offspring, daring to contradict their parents," a really vicious Del Piombo snarled. "Here am I, from the mother of the arts, treated like all mothers. No one wants me, I am old fashioned. Fancy me, a Del Piombo." The lady, some Isabella d'Este, shrugged her melancholy shoulders with a large Italian shrug.

"You stink, you *ci-devant*," laughed a really diabolical Rouault, "you were painted without an idea by a courtier. Imagine me, forged out of the white-hot smithy of social hate. I am a protest, a fighter. And I won't shut up. You'll all listen to me."

"Right, *vive la Commune*," a sadly dilapidated Courbet chimed in, but the up-to-date Rouault snapped back, "Be still, your style is that of amateur, Utopian revolution. You are as fusty as a Del Piombo."

Then they all went mad with conceit. Catholic pictures put their hands on their hearts, romantic gentlemen flung gloves, fat generals and bankers of George Grosz exhibited their creased trousers and puffed their perfectos with an offending air, wan, abstract statues of Archipenko shrank from the conflict, nudes scuttled to the walls. The powerful moderns were winning along the line. Scarlet blasts of Odilon Redon led in the attack, massed woodcuts of Valloton and Galanis came on, chunkily classic oils retreated, a sanguine of La Tour and a chiselled cameo of Clouet dared cross swords but fell back. The rear guard was called up, the city watch of Rembrandt. It covered the classic rout with trimmed beards, ruffs and halberds. At last a delicate Sisley called out, "Oh save me, I suffocate. I a poor string of young poplars along the thin low Loing! I need air, air. I have to grow, allow me."

Mme Joyeux awoke Simone. She recounted the dream, "That's conventional," said the old lady, "animated pictures. The staple of vaudeville. Russian choreographers give ballets in which the statues of the Louvre abandon their prim restraint when the visitors leave."

"No, no, Madame, with all respects, that is not exact. My dream concerned their personalities, social meaning, their schools. But tell me, you have some excellent canvases here, why are you so poor?"

"Consignment for the most part. Painters not yet recognized. Mortgaged paintings, a hundred reasons. No one comes here when

success is assured; they go to the Rue Bonaparte, Jacques-Callot, Seine, La B  tie. But I have discovered a dozen geniuses, I am rewarded."

The conversation went on. "Mademoiselle," the old lady said, "if you want to live in Paris . . ."

"I don't."

". . . if you do, and I assume you must, you have no money, live in Belleville. I have a cousin there, Th  odule Joyeux, also of a Toulon family. He lives near the Rue du T  l  graphe, in a court. There you will see the Paris of the people. It may, I said may, make you more content."

Soon the two Simones were on the O-bus headed for the Place Gambetta. It showed a far more interesting city. The bus zig-zagged past the Archives and watch of Oliver de Clisson, by the tortuous courts and lanes of the Temple, in a Paris soaked in the history of its artisans, its merchants and rebels. It climbed long streets with sad, white houses, until it skirted the metropolis of the dead, P  re-Lachaise, and gained the gay Place Gambetta, centre of coffee and funeral wreaths. They climbed to the Rue du T  l  graphe.

In a pleasant courtyard was the home of Th  odule Joyeux, cabinetmaker, scroll maker, tippler, orator, member of societies, all heart, hand, mouth, and no intelligence. Simone was put up there. She had a cubbyhole; in it a cot. Mme Joyeux was a talkative girl from Saint-Rapha  l. Her kitchen smelled of garlic, her mouth smelled of garlic, her soul also.

As it happened, the day was blue. Simone was cheerful, for she relished the home cooking and accent. The little Simone could not keep her eyes off the model of beauty. "I am leaving, Mademoiselle," she curtsied. "Do not expect the men here to worship you as I do. They prefer full-cheeked, pink women, even the artists do. Or that tired enamel face with small bones. But I love you."

In Belleville, Simone was at home. The tenement population gathered in the court to watch her painting. They were commentators but respectful. Th  odule, superb craftsman, medalled for his skill, hired by the elegant shops in the West End, offered really delicious suggestions for decoration. House painters, whitewashers, wood turners, funeral sculptors, florists, carvers, vanity-box makers, medallists, every worker of the surrounding tenements modestly offered suggestions. They respected an "artist." They dared not claim that proud name for themselves.

Simone listened kindly. She was surprised at their avid perceptions, their just proportions. Their suggestions came from experience. They helped her. Her work soon became more precise. It showed exactness of thinking as well as of execution.

All my vanity, my romantic fat, has fallen away, I have the muscles of the people, she thought joyfully, when she finished a canvas of the courtyard and its groups. Who takes his breath from a common air, draws deep.

An importunate metalworker, Jean Labory, gay, short, small, but as active as a weasel, asked Simone to join the Workers' Circle of Nature Lovers. It had flags inscribed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Buffon, the delightful entomologist, Jean-Henri Fabre, and Charles Darwin. At first, Simone was above such naïveté, but her happy experience with the courtyard population had turned her away from sterile superiority.

She went out for rambles and picnics in the countryside, at Versailles, Meudon, Compiègne, Fontainebleau, Provins. There she learned to love the Northern forest, to note the grace of the tablecloth sky, the temporary but thick foliage, the short emerald grass, the oily lazy rivers, so unlike the torrential Rhône and Durance. Their architecture was also striking, more intellectual than in the South. Vaux-de-Vicomte, the Petit-Trianon, the hardy Mansart at Maisons-Laffitte, were precious additions to her perceptions of balance and of control. For all that, she resented the absence of lush vegetation, boiling sun, flamboyant buildings. She was influenced, she was sympathetic, but she was never convinced.

Once in a while she cried for her vineyard worker, for Stéphane. Not often. She had many new ideas to occupy her. She worked very hard at embodying them. She knew no political dogmas. But the girl that worked alone in Arles or with one man, now knew that life is not understood only by monologue or dialogue. She felt the implicit destiny of labour when she lived among these heirs of Palissy and Hepplewhite. The gospel that the true is the useful, common to American pragmatism and primitive populist socialism, nearly became her criterion.

Jean Labory asked her to live with him. He too was opposed to marriage. She refused but was intimate with him, casually, happily, for the moment. Her relations with him were low in passion, but pleasant. He was so happy to sleep with a beautiful girl; Simone so charmed to see how pleased he was when they were



with his metalworking comrades. He practically said, "I am brighter than you, I have the prettiest girl."

He exhibited her at socialist gatherings. He took her to the moving pictures in the Rue Boyer, at the co-operative, and proudly stood with her at the bar for a fifty-centime drink of white wine. There he merged his active pleasure at the Soviet pictures with holding the hand of the Arlésienne.

Occasionally Simone went down to Montparnasse to sell her pictures to Mme Joyeux. She sold a few, for two or three hundred francs, no fortune, but it paid for *bouillabaisse*. She never stayed in "the quarter," for she had heard of artists destroyed by living in an atmosphere where art is too much discussed.

"I am not mature enough. I haven't enough resistance to bright talk to overcome the temptation." Increasingly she knew herself, increasingly her inflation went down.

She was able to make a decent living soon. Rodier was using artists like Raoul Dufy to make his cloth designs. Simone applied, pleased the textile designers, and made silk and brocade designs. It taught her to adapt her work to the needs of others. Her painting reflected her bread-and-butter activity.

Once her subjects had embraced the heavens and the earth. Now she was as detailed as a Pieter de Hooch. The courtyard in which she lived, the Rue du Télégraphe, the cemetery at Belleville where the Commune made its last stand, the Wall of the Martyrs, covered with red wreaths from Moscow, from San Francisco, the statue in suggested bas-relief of the shooting of the Communards (the most poetic sculpture yet fashioned), these inanimations and the housewives with their children in the pretty Place Martin-Nadaud, exhausted her Paris subjects. She tried to render the beauty of an oak forest in the depths of Champagne. She gave it up, for it imitated somebody, she did not know whom. She tried Northern meadows, they were false.

"But a Southerner can learn. So many painters have come from my country and dominated Paris." She thought of the Marseillais, Daumier, who never yielded his Southern intensity, but whose equipment is the despair of critics. She passed his house, next the chivalrous Hôtel de Lauzun with its porpoise-decorated gilt spout, and she meditated on the drowned chestnut trees he saw from his studio window. Why could she, too, not recapture this city, floating in grey space? Or was she forever blinded by the sun?

The summer passed, the autumn's inflexible hand stripped the green foliage, put on its trade-mark of brown, russet, gold, then its feeble hand was struck down too, and the bare land was decorated with skeletons. The summer charm of the North was gone, the autumn entr'acte was played. The tragic last act was intolerable.

Despite her love for her neighbours, the workers in the Nature Circle, the honest but tepid embraces of Jean Labory, winter was too powerful an enemy. On a November night, she dreamed of Stéphane once more. More humane, she regretted her cruelty on Mont Ventoux. She wanted frantic love, she thirsted for her home rivers.

She announced her intentions to the Joyeux family. They, good Toulonnais, understood. A surprise buffet was given for her. The picture dealer, Mme Joyeux came. Her passionate Simone held the hand of the older Simone throughout. Paris workers' delights were strewed on the table: galantines, *cèleri-rémoulade*, potato salad, sausage, sardines, red wine. Everyone regretted the departure of the artist, but, of course, "one must see Papa." Jean Labory believed she would soon come back, so did everyone else. "Who can live away from Paris?" The slum dwellers were certain. They were proud of the city in which they were deprived of so much.

A delegation of sixty friends gathered at the Gare de Lyon as she bought her ticket for Arles. They saw her on to the third-class carriage. They recommended her to the attention of a respectable couple, for the train was crowded with sailors headed for Toulon, "they are so unreliable," and with Italians. They presented her with a three-foot bread, a bottle of red wine, a paper cup, a two-franc knife, and, luxury of luxuries, half a cold chicken in port-wine jelly.

"In all my life at Arles I gathered not a single friend, here I have sixty in six months."

"Because," Théodule Joyeux beamed, "here you lived with a swarm of bees, all working together, and there you were as a snail, seeking to destroy lettuce with solitary holes."

The aggregation kept waving their handkerchiefs until the train thumped over the mighty culverts. Night had fallen. The next morning would see them beyond Lyon. When she saw her Rhône again, she was wild. The gloomy mountains of the Massif Central

threatened the skies with their hideous volcanic cones, but it was home to her. They rounded wine-terraced hills. Soon limestone and vineyard disputed supremacy along the turgid stream. When the dusty lands of the South came up after Orange, she was cradled into peace. They were bare compared to the North in summer, but she felt like a camel who has been put to pasture in the rich fields of Normandy and sees the hot desert sands once more!

*I Believe*

STÉPHANE remained at Carpentras. Mountain, plain and river were his neighbours and companions. The dozen picturesque towns about him sufficed his discouraged brush. From the fountain at Vaucluse whose Petrarchian outpourings are heard further than its own cascade noises, further than Laura's shell ear, down to the broken bridge at Avignon that spans only nurseries, the temptations abounded to paint idyllic scenes, show the pastoral joys of Daphnis and Chloë or, on a fresh evening, to picture a round of ploughman's chants like simple Hesiod.

His painting was deplorable. He took to heart Simone's grandiose indictments and was overcome by her immense belief in herself. He punted his boat into the quiet reaches. There he rested on the oars of regret and observed a few scenes fitfully.

The lonely atheist obeyed his boyhood memories. On Sunday, he heard the evangelical song across the orchard and he entered into the Huguenot temple, bare, poorly attended, poor. He came not for the doctrines but for the deathless aspiration of the humble that culminated in the Bach choral preludes. He waited for the anthology of comfort culled from the Passions. They spoke to his simple, broken heart. Fervidly, he answered the dying prayer:

*Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden  
Scheide du nicht von mir.*

The bass, a mule driver, brought from the depths of his great body the Good Friday tragedy, "*Am Abend wenn es dämmt.*" The dark anguish of Calvary filled the conventicle. Sung in the original German, their words were apprehended, for they were the staff of salvation. The contralto, a seamstress, cried with uncertain tone but loving effort, "*Erbarme Dich,*" our most excruciating, terribly long cry for perfect mercy. The service broke up with the life-rendering *Lacrymosa* of the Mozart Requiem. The divided chorus

tore up man's fate with the sound of an old bed sheet being ripped for bandages.

He walked out of church, stunned. And the first lesson he drew was that of pity for himself, the man rejected. In the spring interlude, he was first convulsed by Simone's valedictory, then lost in regret. Sorrow flowered on the boyhood religious soil. Four plane trees were his baldachin as he squatted on the lawn and transferred his sterile spirit to uncomprehending canvas. He saw nature as his patient servant; it waited on his psyche with melancholy respect. He stood in the forefront of Mont Ventoux, a backdrop for his Byronic emotions.

Governed by a passionate solipsism, he produced emptiness. His pictures told the story. He saw the field of Carpentras as a sea of strawberry leaves, but they drooped. Mont Ventoux was inhabited by its genius, a madcap sorceress, who sucked his life from the lips of a sleeping giant. In the valley is a lonely girl, ossified into a monolith. On it is engraved a male mask. She looks impassively into a desert in which is buried her lonely heart. The moment he finished the picture he was covered with terror.

He cried to himself: Rip up these shows of my barrenness! No. Let them stand. Self-pity is death.

The Bach chorals now sung themselves into his body with a shout. He was one of a multitude. Christ died for a multitude. Not for the soul of each man but for all. Stéphane asked, "If He died for each one, by himself, why did He need the church? These were the springs of life, the Bethesda. Closed lives drank from scum-covered pools. Where was the church? Who was Bach? Where did he take that canvas of noises, that palette of sounds, that pictorial power that impressed more than the most daring murals?"

Stéphane saw his vision: Bach believed! Credo, the thumping yea of the B minor Mass. He saw the Christian Pantheon and he wanted to join. He saw the Father and he produced twenty-two children to flatter the prototype. He saw the Son and he taught him to play the clavecin. He saw the Holy Ghost and it was his second wife that closed his stone eyes. He saw the congregation, the republic of God. He saw the Book, full of great tales. He saw the state, Pontius Pilate. His back hurt as they flayed Jesus. He answered Satan with organ pipes. He hurled the mixed voices of the saved at the scheming Lucifer. The Bach cantatas were the merry folk of the Flemish painters kicking up a heavenly row. Credol

What made Dante the sum total of a thousand years? I believe! What pushed Milton to the summits? I believe! Be not as the little men, Stéphane Sabatier! Leave them to their muckraking, their dissections, their trills and ornaments, their squeezed talents at the service of tickling rancours. Handel burst his operatic bonds with the grand story. So do they all.

There is a new gospel on this earth: socialism. How Johann Sebastian Bach would have exulted in it. How he would have drawn, from the savage wrath of Marx against the factory lords, the organ thunder of Jeremiah! Every Bach summarizes the folk soul. They think they believe in gospels, but they are really glad to be alive and to be one of a bunch and they treasure the rich stuffs of the ages that are the joys of the crowd. Stéphane was glad they were glad. Look what they did with a myth. What might man not achieve when he knew why he had once pursued such fruitful myths? So thought the reborn Stéphane Sabatier.

The next Sunday the choir sang, "*O! Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.*" He wept for the head of Christ, full of blood and wounds, in the sacrifice willed by Him, foreseen by Him, in which He suffered from the injustice of His knowing persecutors. That victim to-day was the people. They went into revolution, they foresaw its horrors and their possible deep defeat. Their enemies were malicious, but their very cruelty was brought out by the passion of the multitude to be free.

The one Christ became for him the legion of thousands of working men who fell under the lead shower of the rich in the Commune of 1871. Taken out day after day before the cynical officers who wittily selected a sprinkling for the firing squad, they recalled the twelve stations of the cross. The taunts of the epigoni, the insults covering the fallen, from precious valets like Théophile Gautier, were like the maledictions of Caiaphas.

The small chorus ambitiously sang excerpts from the Mass of César Franck. Stéphane sat through the amorphous Kyrie eleison and the vaporous declamations. But when the Credo came forth, the Mass became a rock, from which came forth the water of life. Franck's overrefined muse turned from weakness to strength because he *believed*. As Stéphane heard, "He sitteth on the right hand of the Father," he knew his place, to stand on the right hand of the spirit that affirms, to serve his class as the Son had offered everything to serve the Father. The people shall rise again. They shall judge the

quick in their tribunals and the dead in their histories. The boy who grew wine and pressed the red juices remembered the days of exhausting labour by the side of the *gavaches*. He remembered the vice of money that gave him so many sores. He spewed its diseased memory. Out into the fields!

He passed the stringy barley plants. "Look at them. They're like a weedy boy with growing pains. I am that boy. My muscles are growing at sixes and sevens. My ribs ache with my fast-stretching skin. I will soon be an artist, mature."

He longed for Simone in a big man's way. The involvement was over but the need was greater than ever. "I believe in her because I believe in woman alive." He wished for the same fresh excitements as in her garden at Arles. He kissed her in his sleep with good solid smacks, he punched pillows with his powerful head. He was unashamed of his yells when they roused the neighbouring truck farmer, who rushed to his cabin at three in the morning.

"Monsieur, I came quickly, you are ill?"

"No, just crazy about my girl."

The neighbour slipper-shuffled out. He was bald and fat but love, he knew, was something excellent. "Especially from such a manly fellow." He told his thin-lipped wife, "He is like a sentimental prize fighter I once knew."

"Precious little he taught you," snapped the vixen.

At last Stéphane was without a centime. He had written Onésime asking for a small sum. Two thousand francs came out of the registered envelope. Clean, fresh, neatly folded notes. Cécile wrote:

Dear Brother Stéphane,

Do not trouble to repay this money. We count it a privilege to be of service to one who is fulfilling his aims. It is we that are in debt to you for permitting us, in this easy way, to feel ourselves one with the arts.

Onésime sends his love, I am not behindhand.

He crushed the neat notes. "A pensioned artist, a mistress. My brother passes me his girl, now he passes me money. I won't see anything until I depend on what I earn. My food now comes out of the air. I have an Aladdin's-lamp view of art. To Marseilled Where the dealers are. Where I will be in business again but. n

the right business. Not another Bohemian, the darling of his family."

In Marseille he obtained a cheap skylight studio in the Cours Pierre-Puget, those ascending gardens that put an inclined plane of silence over the too-excited city. There he painted diligently; there he momentarily lost his rural themes; he was diverted into civic thinking. Into too much thinking, in fact. For the first wave of yea-saying broke on the smooth sands of speculation.

He watched the lovers in the gardens. The boys were eager, their caps cocked, a meretricious dandyism their attraction. The girls seemed all ears inclined, bodies supple, just enough mockery to protect them from folly. The rustle of their skirts was the publicity of their thrills, the flash of their eyes, a lens packed with dark-roll film. He felt the charge of their bodies. Here were incompleting circuits because some legal electrician had not done his job. No wonder they so often decided on an amateur splicing of the wires. He liked them as one does colts, does, heifers, kittens. When he was finished with his careful sketches, he went to the museum for comparison.

When he watched the costumed wax figures of the seventeenth-century worthies, he reflected: I cannot make a correspondence between love in former times and in the present. The people in those days were little. A man, five feet three, was quite tall. A runt of to-day might be large for the Black Prince's armour. Their women were children by our standards. If we had to marry them we should feel criminal. Everyone was worried whether his girl would be marked for life by smallpox. Food stank. The breaths of sonneteers must have been vile. Man lived about thirty years, to-day near sixty. Love was an adolescent excitement of doomed pygmies whose cities were dominated by smells as ours by noises and smoke. These ancestors heard smaller music because they had no motor trucks or buses. They produced children and then died, much like beetles. Their painters expressed puppets' emotions in their faces and had to cover their marionettes with silks and satins to give them a fleeting importance. They overloaded the idyll of courtship for there was such little time for the adult emotions.

I must paint love to-day as it comes to a larger race, one for whom youth and youth's needs are but the early acts of a long play. My people will survive their first eloquence, their love will have a long time in which to droop or to cool satisfactorily. They will



live to see their children repeat the cycle. They come to love after a day surcharged with complex machinery or complex ideas. They live for the most part in great aggregations and their amorous whispers are the ghosts of their city noises. If this is true of love, most elemental need after the gullet's stuffed, it is true of everything else.

Yes, there were eternal themes. But to picture them as they seem now, not as they once were! If Simone were here! She threw light on everything. But he would never hear from her again.

Stéphane created so little while in the philosophic doldrums that he became finicky as to what he did not accomplish. He looked at exhibited paintings, at albums, at reproductions. What common style linked our contemporaries, as against what we now recognize as common features even of a Poussin and a Watteau? Foolishly, Stéphane stopped painting to read histories of art. He was so eager that he never asked himself whether or not there may be an autonomy in painting that can never be equivalented by words at all, or, that the history of art consists only of a catalogue and an expression of likes and dislikes, multiplied.

But he became suspicious despite the beauty of printing and binding of the de luxe books he studied. A clever critic dogmatically compared the exquisite conception of bathing women of Poussin with the produced, "expressionist," bathing women of Cézanne. But in pouring over a manual giving detailed reproductions by sections of El Greco, he came across an altar cloth in the *Burial of Count Orgaz* and discovered that in 1600 he thought exactly like Cézanne in 1890.

He looked out at the sunlit town from the jaundiced museum with its ferret-eyed students and felt he was decidedly in the wrong place. Sick of it, he tossed the great tomes into the air with athletic insistence, rushed by the aghast librarian, took deep breaths in the street, laughed like a horse, got down to the sports field and wished himself into a dockers' five, playing basketball. He knew what to paint and how. No more books.

A social enthusiast, he began like all of them. With a neophyte's purity, he painted workers in mass. After this social measles: strikes and demonstrations. At last he drew on his experience and portrayed capitalists. Here his older hatreds and images were guides.

He painted a rich man surrounded by twelve children. Each was a special negative type: foxy, wolfish, fishy, goatlike, bovine, apish (for the boys), their animal heads suggested merely by a slight turn in the features and the fingernails. The girls were represented as human beings, but as Jezebel, Sapphira, Joanna the Mad, Catharine of Russia, *la cousine* Bette, and Mme Steinhil, famous in French criminal annals. They wore rings distorted by symbols of their special vices or defects.

His second picture was a travesty on the lovely *Sposalizio* of Raphael. A high priest wearing the robes of the high treasurer of France, united two couples. The first groom was carrying a phial. The second groom was carrying a Hercules club, a fiery cross and, beside him, a suction pump attached to a girl whose blood was ebbing. Stéphane stopped. He was ashamed at his own simplicity in so clearly identifying Rashi-Mordecai and François.

A year had gone by since the fatal St. John's Eve. There was no trace of Simone. Her father was as anxious and as ill informed as Stéphane. The painter's spirit was bold, his ideas straight, his ability improving, but the gains were slow. Why didn't he explode into greatness? He was no longer modest. He asked and he was answered by a vivacious light-o'-love.

"That's a crazy picture," someone chirped behind his shoulder. He looked up and saw a lady making a perch of his collar, gently nibbling his hair. She was buxom, blonde, a collector of male pocketbooks by any route. "I mean that's a rich chap, a millionaire. Why is he thin? Give him a pheasant-and-cake-lined belly."

"Everybody does," Stéphane laughed, "every cheap cartoonist does."

"They're right, my treasure, my honey. Do you want to enjoy yourself? Can I make good! Feel my biceps." She moved a peasant muscle that would have made her a worthy wife to a catch-as-catch-can champion. "That's not the strongest part of me," she commented. "In fact, with a beef-steak basis, I can give you love, la, la! You're a pretty strong fellow yourself. Why don't you go in for a man's job? Why are all the six-footers I sleep with piano tuners and the runts dockers, or railway porters? Do you know?"

Stéphane asked, "I thought you said something about a steak."

"Yes, Monsieur, gladly."

"*Garçon*," he commanded, "an——"

"Understand, Monsieur," snapped the waiter.

"How often do you cadge a steak?" Stéphane said, amused.

"I live by cadging. Sometimes I get in two against lean days. I hate those thin men in your pictures." When the warmed-over horse steak was brought she fell to and shut up.

Stéphane thought: Lévy-Ruhlmann obsession, tradition, Molière's misers always thin, my life now ascetic, not enriched by pleasure. The senses starved. Out of nothing comes nothing. Life must be drained to the full if an artist is not to be arid. He looked at the blowsy woman. No, it's impossible. Huguenot, your pleasures will have the colourless taste of reason. If you eat a fine dish, you will not taste it with Gargantua's relish, and your girl friend will be Barbara Celarent. Raise your soul by a syllogism's space.

He held the hand of the cheery strumpet to make her feel that her arts got somewhere. But the image of Simone was a richer wantonness than any her exploring fingers prepared him for. He was a lover pledged. Infidelity was impossible. For him the pleasures of life must begin with character and the imagination; they might end in a superb sensual climax, but they would never spring from a mere sensual source. He knew himself too well to flirt with the pathetic offerings of marketed love.

At the end of the meal, the lady mentioned a hotel number to him and floated out, expectant. He sent the *garçon* after her and gave her some small silver. He needed it himself. She laughed, "To think a man as big as you is impotent. Who would have guessed it?"

Who would have guessed it, he thought. She is right. There is so much to do, do it, or the world will think of you in art as she does in . . .

Stéphane tramped down the highroad to Arles. He left his belongings with his landlord as a pledge of his return. He had not conquered Marseille and he was without a job, fame, customers. As he got into the suburbs, he remembered it was his second exit in bankruptcy. But the first had him worried. At this one he was entertained. Then he had lost everything, now he was seeking everything. One glimpse of Simone and he would be ready to move mountains.

He was worried whether her father had heard some terrible news, such as of her death, and had not dared to tell him. For that reason he must see him personally. On the road, kindly lorry drivers took

him along for most of the stages, so that he soon came into the limestone suburbs of Arles, dusty, hot with the sun of a hundred-degree day, but not overtired.

He entered the Lamouroux garden. He fell back. Simone was watering the azaleas. The sprinkler was lifted high as she saw him. She was startled, rejoiced, but she must play her prank. He ran after her. She dashed the water on his clothes, then rushed against his wet shirt and clung to him and sobbed, "I am such a fool, my love. Oh, my love."

*Don't Read the Mail*

SIMONE was chastened. She showed Stéphane some pretty stuffs for which she had inquiries from silkmakers at Lyon. Her lace designs had been accepted and caused a furore. She created a modern Bayeux-tapestry motif. The midgets were no longer Norman knights but stylized artisans, based on those she met in Paris.

She had been at Arles for several months and had looked for Stéphane as ardently as he for her. She never mentioned many things, though. Jean Labory was one, the last night at Mont Ventoux another. He told her nothing of his fidelity to her, for he could not predict whether she would be pleased or consider him a prude.

Simone seemed older and wiser. She was rounded, not pointed. When she boasted of her designs, she told Stéphane that several women had revolutionized the field recently and were her superiors. That, he never heard before. But Stéphane and her father missed the girl whose charm was linked to her geyser escapades, mockery, taunts, her ordered wilfulness. They had been tortured by Simone's tricks but now they were homesick for them. Stéphane remembered her slapping Onésime in the hospital and humiliating Cécile at her wedding. But the fair Lamouroux had had a shock in Paris, that of kindness and co-operation. What need of a wasp's sting when everyone garnishes your nest?

Stéphane, too, she respected more. She sensed he was strong, had better fixed his style, was a citizen as well as an artist. He was steeped in popular causes, so was she. He was not the man who wrote vicious letters and was cold to his victim, De Pressensé. The spirit that denies, the whistle of Mephisto, were of the past.

This full atmosphere was satisfying but, like all thick, hot, heavy days, it was charged with lightning. Simone was quiescent, that was all. For the moment, though, ripeness, sweet friendship, and

common work inhabited the sunflower garden. It was the golden age when the husbandman returns from his labours, the harvest is yellow and abundant, and peace is in the land. The fire of Prometheus was hoarded in a strongbox.

Once when the calm of their lives was too great, Simone insisted they go to Les Antiques at Saint-Rémy, last refuge of the deranged Van Gogh. It recalled a needed aberrant flavour, but no insane impulses led the dance. Simone was so happy to have Stéphane back that he dominated the refractory principality that was herself; its rebellious politics rested in fine suspense.

This idyllic period was broken by the postman. A letter was forwarded from the Cours Pierre-Puget:

Monsieur,

You will be astonished to receive a letter from me. I saw you on the Cannebière once but you did not recognize me. And justly. I am a failure, whereas from what I hear, you have found a new life and in it you have achieved distinction. I am in business again, in a small way, but doing rather well.

Do me the honour of calling when you are near the Quai de Joliette. My offices are in the Rue Maxenot: turn left from the cathedral on the ramp.

I would like my old ruined warehouses immortalized in a fine lithograph: a print will be my souvenir of a fortune!

Receive, Monsieur, the assurance of my high consideration.

Xavier de Pressensé

M. Stéphane Sabatier,  
Cours Pierre-Puget 35, Marseille

Stéphane liked no offerings from the corrupted dead. He wrote:

M. de Pressensé,  
Rue Maxenot, Marseille

You have made a profound mistake. I am a man, not a bear, and I am not caught with honey.

Receive, Monsieur, my impressive salutations.

To which the wily merchant countered:

Monsieur,

I have received a laconic insulting note from you implying that behind my order for an art job there was hidden an intention to harm you. This without evidence. I congratulate you on your cowardice. You fear any dangers, even those conjured up by yourself, and dread to face the issue. If I did not write to a bear, neither did I to a man.

Receive, Monsieur, my salutations.

Pressensé

to M. Stéphane Sabatier, *lodger*,  
chez Lamouroux, Place de la République 7, Arles  
(B-du R.)

The duel terminated:

Pressensé, Rue Maxenot, Marseille

You make continuous mistakes in natural history. Neither bear nor man, I am not a bull either; taunts are unavailing.

Receive my salutations, not extremely impressive,  
Sabatier, lodger

P.S. Marseille has an excellent zoo: complete your studies.

A more exciting letter followed. It seemed a playwright's sequence:

Monsieur,

I just learned that you have always felt that I bribed a clerk to intercept a binder insuring the *Lucie de Lamoille*. You suspect, I learn with horror, that I was not alien to its burning in Cyprus. You attribute your ruin to me! I wondered at your strange behaviour, amounting to brutality, before the funeral of Denys Renouvier, our relative, and my associate. Monsieur, no man can prove a negative. I cannot prove I did *not* intercept binders, did *not* burn a ship. I am disarmed but miserable. This calumny unnerves

me; do advise me, Monsieur, how I can allay your suspicions and clear my name of this hideous imputation?

Receive my homage.

Solomon Gerson Rom-Bom Lévy-Ruhlmann

M. Stéphane Sabatier,

25? 35? 37? Cours Pierre-Puget, City

"Cunning as ever," Stéphane said admiringly, "the other man has been shadowing me, he has the exact address. Lévy-Ruhlmann gives the impression he heard it vaguely, that he never checks up. The intimate word, 'City,' for Marseille confirms the feeling; delicately done, that. Always one up on De Pressensé." Stéphane foolishly replied:

Monsieur,

I regret your conscience troubles you. Settle your guilt or innocence with your God, as you yourself state you cannot prove a negative. I hope you may see Him soon. Until you stop annoying my brother, because he defends the patrimony of Cécile and his child, I must consider every move of yours as in bad faith and a wretched manœuvre. I am not a hypocrite. I wish you ill. I bear you a deep grudge. I shall return, unopened, any dirty letters you send me. I shall send back, unheard, any messengers you send to me.

I cannot add the usual respectful superscription.

Stéphane Sabatier

M. Lévy-Ruhlmann,

*Plutocrat*, Cannebière 17, Marseille

This irruption of letters, in the grand French style, from two rogues indicated that some sudden conflict had arisen in which both parties sought to involve Stéphane. He did not care to probe the reason why he, obscure, poor, out of business, had this unexpected use. The implacable sun of Provence was undermining his health, and he thought of dodging the Marseille involvement and the heat equally by going up to the Causses, the mountain lands of Lozère near by. They were the European rivals to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado as stupendous, original challenges to the painter's perspective



and colours. The summer too began unpleasantly. The winds from the North-east, fellows of the dread mistral, were, as the proverb has it, eating the mud. Simone packed their kits and forced Stéphane to go into the lost lands before he could get another attack of social conscience, and before he and her father could complete the hundredth argument for legal marriage.

*Mountain and Plain*

You could see nothing from the dale. It was up above here, the herdsmen told them, frightened. People came from the cities and dared scale the heights and look up there, but they were fools, they didn't know what they were doing. It was a city built by giants, overcome by demons who crumbled their stone blocks, made them hideous, evil.

"Do you know what it is, Monsieur, no? Then let me tell you, on that frightening slope you will find out, it is Sodom, city of confusion. You will fly in terror, your senses may leave you."

Stéphane wondered at this delusion of the shepherd's. From what could it come? Here they were at a dozen kilometres, not more, from the industrial city of Millau besieged with tourists anxious to explore the world-famed Gorge of the Tarn. How could such primitive ideas be entertained?

"Do not listen to him, Madame, Monsieur," said a young fruit-grower. "I am educated, I know better. There is a grouping of rocks above the precipices; a fantastic set of eroded stones twisted to look somewhat like a city, but if you are not already unbalanced you will see it for what it is. The old people here are childish. They are cunning in raising their lambs, in giving long life and rich bearing to the walnut tree, but they lack education ever so much."

"Stay away from the advice of the young and the foolish," the dreadfully ugly, wrinkled, farmwife told them. "It is a colony of dolmens, of menhirs, sacred to the ancient men about these parts. They inscribed circles of the sun up there, they were druids."

"Have you ever seen it," Simone asked them, "seen Montpellier-le-Vieux, I mean?" There was a medley of answers. Most had barely glimpsed it, but had not dared go further. Some were too frightened to look at all. Several had accompanied university people from Grenoble and officials of the Club Alpin Français. They said it was nothing at all.

No painters had attempted it, no; no tourists had made more than

a rough ink sketch, and one or two had brought back a *gowache*. That was all. It had been photographed by a methodical government official but the old people wagged their heads. "He has not been heard of since." Apparently it was a brother to Stonehenge, Carnac, or the Avebury Circle.

"To-morrow we go up to the dolmens." Simone was blunt. The old folk were equally blunt in their remarks about her imbecility, for it is said in the South that you hear less compliments in the Aveyron in ten years than you hear anywhere in France in ten days. The meal was eaten in silence; the *caussenards*, the people of the limestone plateaux, don't like those who regard their advice lightly.

Their food was invariable, rough rye bread and chestnut paste. They drank water, as rare and exquisite a drink to them as wine was in the plains. Simone saw their resentment and their poverty. She had brought with her a solitary bottle of poor wine. She offered it to the herdsmen. It did not completely tame their savagery. They drank it with joy but with little thanks. Apparently they were very much afraid of the city of rocks above them, or afraid of its phantom hordes.

The next morning the two explorers clambered up the precipice and found before them perhaps the most startling sight in France. Ahead of them lay three hundred acres or more of twisted rocks, gigantic, for all the world a ruined city, yet man had never touched anything here, except perhaps to dress a stone and call it a statue. There were, overhanging the cliffs, great gardens crowded with rock flowers, most of which neither artist had ever before seen or imagined; it was exactly like the hanging gardens over the Euphrates as given in Herodotus.

"It is astonishing, astonishing," Stéphane murmured. "Babylon as in the Bible. But here is a set of rocks that—no, it is not possible! It is a true dead city suspended over nothingness."

Simone looked about. "Stéphane, it is terrifying. There is another city." He surveyed. In a large section of rocks there were arches and obelisks, pyramids and cunning broken portals, stoas, loggias, or the ground plans of loggias. It was Herculaneum without a human designer.

They looked about them: far away stretched the Causse Noir, the black limestone plateau; in the remote distance another Sahara, bleaker still, the Causse de Larzac. There was no hope anywhere and they stood still with fright in the petrified metropolis. They

looked up and saw on two sides of a parliament of rocks, two orators, so it seemed; suspended, assailing each other. There was a moment of blank fear, then they gathered up their senses and studied the scene.

There were four cities. They would soon be on the highest. That, they had heard, was termed the Citadel. It stood there with an agora, a Tarpeian rock, the judging place of the inanimate population of the other towns. It rose to a height of three thousand feet, a few hundred over the others.

They peered over a precipice, on the other side of the assemblage. The valley of the river Dourbie lay beneath them, the perfect oasis. It had no relation to the prehistoric life they now experienced. "We are two missing links embracing each other." Simone, frightened, tried protective humour. "Wake me up when the expedition arrives from some museum of natural history."

They passed broken wall and cracked arch, and saw with terror a harmoniously disposed group of streets and market places, from which radiated a strangely mixed series of lanes and roads and courts; but one, which despite its apparent disorder, soon fixed itself as a maze as precise as those worked out by Dutch gardeners for cosy, quirky, retired burgomasters. Simone saw no sign of humanity anywhere; she would fling herself on this splendid stony breast.

Fortunately, the summer sky was darkening and the flash of lightning and rumbling of thunder in that solitary realm were a relief instead of an added terror, for they broke the tension of silence and unending bleakness in the surrounding lands. She tried to get rid of her impressions by sportively naming the streets, Avenue of Dinosaur Cuckolds, Wittol Path, Circle of Saurian Dupes, Plaza of the Cutpurse Druids. She called the houses Paleontologist's folly, Fossil Botany villa, but stopped short and held her breath.

Stéphane was less beaten but perhaps more impressed. Images came tumbling upon him as in a child's book of woodcuts full of exaggerated beings; he peopled the amazing town of eroded stones with appropriate grave, stupendously silent, and meditative beings.

They looked upon the three circuses, one a city, the other an amphitheatre, the third a gathering place of soldiery. The rocks were powerfully white and assertive. Whole sections of scattered stones among them were shaped like damned people, those that had suffered a fate like Lot's daughter. He fancied the fugitive Huguenot preachers praying before illegal congregations in remote valleys,

in the days of bloody Louis XIV, calling on their following to witness the damnation of the Lord in the dread city above. They would have required no more abundant confirmations, for it was there they would station their lookout, they would be as the flaming guardians of the gate, before the dragoons sent from hell.

They got down from the citadel, and from the lowest circus saw the whole city as a series of castle towers and walls, abounding with cubic figures. A cold wind was rising where an hour before the heat was direct and blistering. A storm came upon them suddenly, shot out a cloudburst, the air was instantly arctic. The storm soon passed. As soon as it stopped one could see the water percolating into innumerable fissures in the desolate limestone. Two hours later a new Sahara had replaced the former one. How did the lambs find their sustenance on those mesas? Man could die.

They were not wet; Stéphane had a cloak; he had covered Simone and both huddled. They were happy to see water flowing down the declivity of the four ravines that were in a way the four bases upon which the strange statues of Montpellier-le-Vieux were set. They walked about the surrounding boulevard, a natural, stone moat, until they came to a sacrificial altar, just like Stonehenge, and then Simone ran; Atalanta's fleetness, a rabbit's heart. She ran athwart stunted pine trees, into grandiose hollyhocks intermingled with sharp briars, past wild-strawberry plants pushing through the thick moss on rocks that were now made damp. She suddenly recovered reason and sat down, plop. "Pouf," she breathed. "Stéphane, I am afraid of this place, let's get down."

"I don't know now whether I saw what you did or not," he went over his experience as she rejoiced at the welcome valley. "I wonder whether we are not, so to speak, compelled to make geometrical patterns out of rocks. After all, a good case could be made for seeing it as a mere chaos of rocks, picturesque only for their crowding, intensity and variety. In a way they are hideous. I was more terrified by that than by literary fears of the city of the lost. It was to me the first chapter of Genesis: 'The earth was without form.'"

They clambered down to a watering place in the river, a point where a thousand sheep could gather and drink deep from the rain-enriched torrent. The flock had wandered so long in thirst that they set up a collective bleating near as loud as bellowing. They remembered their lamb steps, they gambolled with joy. "I knew it," said

Simone. "After the first chapter of Genesis, we come across Abraham's flocks, or rather Cain's." Strange cries of happiness came from the water-drunken sheep.

"My love, I am not as strong as I thought," Simone confessed.

Montpellier-le-Vieux challenged the last ordered ideas of Stéphane. The more he grouped what he saw, the less it appeared a city to him. That was a poetic fancy of simple men. He wondered what principle could govern that astonishing chaos. You could do nothing with most of the fashionable approaches. He laughed as he rejected a treatment like *pointillisme* for that view. But he looked into himself and saw that, if the eye by itself is blind, the brain by itself makes what we see too formal. He was muddled, worried.

Simone was direct. She began working on her impressions, stamped by her fears. She produced a set of quickly pictured notes in which she showed a fearful Jehovah, anxious that his rival gods should not see his botchwork, hurling all his errors into Montpellier-le-Vieux. He appointed his servile angels (those that followed him against Lucifer because he controlled the party machine) to guard the field, within towers as twisted and distorted as their spirits. They were now ossified. That was the city of dead angels.

Their entire holiday was with nature, not man. Society sounded well in cities but painted ill in the magnificent plateaux.

At last they joined the tourist parties down the miraculous Gorge of the Tarn, a river than runs for thirty-five miles under sheer drops of two thousand feet. On the top is the most desolate land in France the Causse Méjean. In that slender canyon there was a riot of flowers among intense dark verdure, under rocks, that shamed the potty palettes of artists. The cold river widened steadily as it went down the canyon. Fed by thirty crystalline fountains, it gained in velocity, argentine flash, magnificence of erosion, delicious wealth of the ribbon shores, at the base of the gorges.

When they found themselves two days later on the arid mesa, they felt as though they were Brobdingnagians, permitted to tear a grey sheet and peer through the thin slits into a green, enchanted, but extremely small paradise. They followed the half million lambs down to the caves of Roquefort, two more erring and woolly beings whose products were cheesy. Even Simone, high spirited, did not resent this disparaging comparison.

"The flowery oases delight cheap-Jacks, the desert stretches

produce the exquisite flavour of Roquefort." Stéphane was disquieted.

"If you were a ram, my dear, our troubles would be less," she said. "You are so thoughtful in this throw-away of nature that you have forgotten my needs."

"I had better be a human being in other respects too, and visit my brother as well as helping you to be happy."

They went down to Béziers by the route of the Chassezac which descends nearly five thousand feet to the sea. They followed the river bed through nearly a hundred miles of circuses, gorges, canyons, both pink and high white, alongside the stream, always an intense jade green.

One afternoon, the river rose with such astonishing rapidity that they barely had time in which to scale the rocks and beat the raging waters. It mounted nearly thirty feet in four hours; the first twenty in less than an hour. The cubic flow was increased more than fortyfold. The Chassezac must have been fed by a concourse of minor streams all of which were so arranged as to spurt their surplus at the same time. Hanging on to a small ledge, threatened by an oscillating boulder, the two painters saw underneath them the most terrible evidence of sudden power, above them the threatening rock, and beside them the slippery precipice walls. The South was certainly not the calm, meandering, rational France of the Touraine or Normandy.

Simone had lost her refractory reason among the dolmens and now she believed in omens like a crone. "Trapped, you and I together, by an unreasoning force, Stéphane," she said; "it is a sign. We shall soon die. Those letters from Marseille—this is their second phase."

Stéphane shook her. "Be sensible. Not trapped, threatened. And escaped."

The river began to recede, enough, at least, to let them get down to a firm footing.

"There," Stéphane answered her, vindicated, "there Simone, look, this river gathers its waters from streams and fountains. You look and say, the rains have fallen. The tributaries have fed the stream yet it is thin. That fixes its capacity, that is its bed, there it must lie. Suddenly the waters imprisoned in lime and clay escape from their vases. The Chassezac looks upon its high gorges and is seized with ambition. It calls up the sponged waters and changes its

speed, volume, height, character, everything. Like an imagination that suddenly fills heaven and earth when it has seemed sure that men can find no new themes. Simone, it is like, I don't know how to express it, let me use a big word, it is like history. When the wiseacres have proved that experience shows that the stream of men can do so much and no more, it calls up its simple needs and reserves and traps its students, its spectators, its artists, in its thundering rise."

Simone, still haunted by the omens, said, "What good is that to us, Stéphane? We must paint everything as at an instant. We are so limited."

He saw she was still afraid and hugged her close. "Stéphane dear, thanks so much. I never thought I would hold on to you for comfort. Hold me, master, hold me. I am afraid."

They rested quiet for a long time. She was afraid of the river, though, which boiled like that over the stones in *The King of the Golden River*. The stones were Lévy-Ruhlmann and Pressensé, the pebbles their associates.

"Stéphane, pack up the kits. Oh, I am grateful, don't think harshly of me. I have learned to work with others. I am kind to you. I am impressed by the simplest things. It is good. A splendid season."

"Our first holiday," he agreed. "The others were intervals in storms."

They came down that afternoon into the innumerable fields of Béziers. Stéphane could barely keep his fingers off the green, small, late June vines. When they came to the eminence west of Béziers from which the Mediterranean, dwarfed, seems a mere blue border to the wine sea, Stéphane hailed the first band of *gavaches* with their local speech. They lifted their large straw hats to the lady. So at last they came to his brother's home.

A fortnight before, Cécile had given birth to a son, named Stéphane after his wandering uncle. Simone, now rested, was charming to her former target and, as Cécile said, it made one believe in redemption. Grandma Sabatier was fussy. She turned up her nose at Simone, was sure her son "slept in sin," but forgave him with a cool ceremonial kiss.

Stéphane and Simone, though, were popular. They were attacked with questions. They told long recitals of their deeds, misdeeds, hopes, failures. Everyone loves a good story and even Mother Sabatier relented a little.



But when Stéphane spoke of the joy of seeing the field labourers again, Onésime said sharply, "They are under the influence of that agitator, Monderoy. They have gone beyond decent limits in their demands. We could handle the business if Cécile had not gone through a Salvation Army experience one night at Port-Vendres, the first time she heard that man dish out his slick language."

Cécile said simply, "In money, Onésime, I know it is vulgar to remind you, mayn't I command my fortune?"

Stéphane asked, surprised, "Weren't you ever a worker, or am I not Stéphane, your brother?"

"Nonsense," Onésime was definite. "Capital has some rights too, one doesn't exclude the other."

"Granted," Stéphane responded, "but though you speak a new language, you still have a foreign accent, that of labour." He said no more but the next day cut short his visit.



BOOK FIVE

A STOUT TREE IS FELLED



*Athanase Fabre, Machine of Trouble*

THAT million francs lost in the Hammam was not lost sight of by Athanase Fabre. The fact that Italians do not yield their citizens to less worthy states did not bother him. He took boat to Naples, traced the guardian of the Turkish-bath boxes, and found him living in a delicious retreat at Villa Miramar (the sign was bought from a peddler), a rococo dwelling painted with fresh clean colours.

The designs were pleasant and not too original. They were carnations, pinks, peonies, lilies, heartsease, everlastings.

He sat heavily in a fat, white-painted, metal garden chair, the former servant at Marseille, and looked with an income taster's joys on the Gulf of Amalfi. The priest knew his merchandise. He went into the garden like a fury, and tempestuously poised himself before the poltroon. He held up the crucifix, approached with implacable step, and ordered the fool to his knees. He demanded the million francs or recommended his good friend to a high-class marble tomb with violet trimmings at the expense of Athanase Fabre.

The miserable Cyprien tried to delay matters. He had some of the money, not much, what there was he would fetch. It was in lire, and did the good father know that lire could not be exported?

"It's not in lire, louse-infested coward," Father Fabre advised him, at the point of a beautiful, large, glistening stiletto with a cloven-hoof, hair-covered handle. "Don't play with me, dog. With the Abyssinian war beginning, you did not convert your loot into lire. Give me my money or, in two words, you die."

"You are a priest, Monsieur."

"I am a victim, one million francs."

"I haven't got them."

"You have, less what you paid for this villa. That also is mine. One million francs. You have one minute."

He flashed the crucifix, highly polished, of bright silver; he dazzled the eyes of the wretch. But money is more powerful than religion. The fat idiot tried to run and get over the garden wall, there to be rescued by a constable, a Fascist guard, or whatnot.

Athanase knew him well, he rushed after him, stabbed him in his enormously cushioned buttock, and waved the stiletto above the fallen donkey as he held his mouth.

"A million francs or it goes into your entrails." He dragged the victim into the salon, where, under an interminable gallery of photographs of all sorts of relatives, in their various states of babyhood, childhood, first communion, marriage, family groups, the residue of this genealogical pack was given a stab in his other buttock, just to give him a Wordsworthian sense of intimations of immortality.

His wife, Angelina, came in. She was about to supply a cry of hysteria when she got a swift blow into dreamland. Athanase waited another minute and gave the Turkish-bath employee a good sweat by stabbing his bicep. That was enough. He saw that he was in for business. He entered the kitchen, his wounded arm held by the diamond-hard grip of Athanase Fabre. He dug up 300,000 French francs.

"The villa cost so much," he wailed. "We must go to the lawyer's to-morrow, he will assign it." He tried to faint but got a whiff of brandy in his nose that stopped him.

"More," said Fabre very tightly. He glanced the other bicep.

"Mother of God, give me a chance," said the white Cyprien.

"Give me the gold," Fabre demanded. Just as he had his fat prey crumbling, the Signora came to.

Athanase Fabre was a master of reaction. "Kiss this, Signora," he said in fluent Italian as he gave the slowly rising face the crucifix. She stretched out for it, and thereupon he crowned her with the sacred instrument.

Cyprien took advantage of this to run and yell, "Help." Fabre again did a twenty-yard dash and dashed the head of Cyprien against the wall as well.

A stormy demand was heard and the gate rattled. "Open, it is the Royal Guard."

Fabre opened the door, and showed them the poor fellow, fallen in an epileptic fit; he was there to administer unction, "to a case, Signori, nearly wholly hypochondriac." They saluted the frocked messenger of truth and went out.

So Cyprien, a mess of blood and dirt and sweat, produced a bank book of the Nice branch of the Banca Commerciale Italiana for 350,000 francs and endorsed it unreservedly to his agent, a French citizen. It looked good, for that was what all canny Italians did at

the beginning of the one-round battle of Duce versus Negus. He signed a deed for the property for which he had been fool enough to pay 250,000 francs. It was a white elephant, only a fool would have bought it on his inadequate capital.

There was 100,000 to account for. That was taken by the millionaire, Lévy-Ruhlmann. That was his price for getting Cyprien out of the country before the trio he robbed got out of the bath. The Alsatian was content with a ten per cent commission only.

The pettifogging schemes that would occur to a Cyprien occurred twice as fast to Athanase. He roused the shivering devil out of his villa and forced the thief and his Angelina to accompany him by air to San Remo on the Italian frontier. He knew that if he bound them in the cellar until he got to France they might be missed by neighbours and released. He was not pleased with the idea of stabbing them, once he got his money.

He packed his two victims into a plane at Naples. They wanted to shriek to the officials but the priest came on behind them in the direct style of a hawk sweeping on chickens. They dreaded his stiletto and were silent. The plane pushed off; Vesuvius was left, a pillar of smoke. Cyprien, a steaming, airsick fool, cursed his natal day and wondered if he, stripped of his last soldo, could get a job on the Italian Riviera. No one could leave the country and he hadn't even the price of a piece of bread.

The priest never looked at them. His eyes were concentrated on the ribs of Cyprien. He never let go looking at their cutlets. For him, Rome and Florence, Spezzia and Genoa, were points where he had to look more keenly on the ribs of that happy couple. Not even Rome, where some day he would be named cardinal, had any effect on the prince of single-track minds.

At San Remo, he placed his prey, unresisting, into a private car down to Ospedaletti and registered them in a little hotel two miles from the French frontier. He kept the car waiting, bound the two fattest people in Italy to the bedsteads, put handmade *poires d'angoisse* into their large mouths, rushed down, and was in France in five minutes.

He collected at Nice within an hour, was at Marseille that evening, and for the sheer evil of it, kept circling about the house of Lévy-Ruhlmann, pleased with himself and seeing that foe as merely another Cyprien.

"I have proved my decision, speed, cleanness of execution,

inflexibility, perfection of detail, down to the end. I have proved that I take no losses like that blunderer, De Pressensé. His brother, the bishop, a competitor of mine for church honours? I can laugh; he is the same soft type."

He went back to the caverns and spoke to Pressensé. "I was absent for three days, I recovered 900,000 francs, in effect. I am out 103,000 francs: 100,000 stolen by Lévy-Ruhlmann and 3,000 for expenses. I shall send him a billet-doux, which he will not dare use against me, for I will scare him out of his wits."

"Go slow, that man has the magistracy of this town in his pocket."

"Go slow has got your game nowhere, De Pressensé. Now watch what I send."

### ATHANASE FABRE

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To S.G.R-B. Lévy-Ruhlmann Dr.

To funds robbed by his connivance

Hammam, Rue de la Darse, July 4, 1934

Fcs. 1,000,000.00

To expenses trip Amalfi of Athanase Fabre, Cr. plus equipment (stiletto)

Fcs. 3,000.00

To interest from July 4, 1934, to June 25, 1935,

@ 5% per annum

Fcs. 48,740.00

Fcs. 1,051,740.00

To funds recovered June 25, 1935, from Cyprien by divers methods,

Fcs. 900,000.00

Due me,

Fcs. 151,740.00

Fcs. 1,051,740.00



Lévy-Ruhlmann received the fantastic bill coolly. It was far from the first time he had been found out, far from the first time he disgorged. But the clever Athanase Fabre was not so happy the next day.

Dear M. Fabre (or rather, Father Fabre),

I have received your bill, obviously written by a black-mailer or a theatrical paranoiac. As I take no chances either with criminals or lunatics, I enclose my banker's cheque for Fcs. 151,740.

Very truly yours,

Marie de Montrésor

The signature was a knockout. Marie de Montrésor was the name of a rich, aristocratic girl sold to Buenos Aires by Fabre and Aboudaram. They had spirited her, hysterically drunk, on to the *Star of La Plata* and were sure that by now she was exhibiting the human form divine behind translucent windows at Montevideo. How did Lévy-Ruhlmann know her, and how had he got her back?

Pressensé exulted, "I told you, know-it-all, not to provoke him. You can triumph over a stinking coward but not a genius. Your next move?"

"Cash the cheque," Fabre said drily. "That's money and you're rhetoric."

"They'll pinch you at the cashier's window."

"They won't."

Fabre went to the bank and offered the cheque. It was paid instantly. Marie de Montrésor was in the bank. He watched for detectives but they never came. At the same time his gazetted *sang-froid* deserted him. Ordinary smuggling, white-slaving, narcotics, these were common charges in Marseille. He was apparently dealing in rosaries, crucifixes, sacred chromos, statuettes, gilt-edged prayer books, and, if his offices happened to be in the same building as law-breakers, it merely shows the innocence and sweet trust that the servants of God mistakenly extend to their fellow wanderers in this vale of tears. But Marie de Montrésor was another affair. She was the daughter of a wealthy notary at Toulon. She was trained for the veil. Fabre was doing a brisk business seducing girls out of the convents. He was sullyng the institution in which he hoped to

rise. That was different. He had sense enough to know that the Bishop of Carpentras could now sandpaper his descent with ease.

The next day, Marie de Montrésor called with four girls. They were devoted to the rising fame of St. Thérèse de Lisieux. The lady had picked them up at the office of the Lisieux pilgrimages and asked them to assist her in a tour of collections. She asked for help to erect the basilica. They put out their collection boxes. Fabre and Pressensé dropped a few francs into each box and looked at the stunningly pretty girls. They left, never having uttered a word.

Now Fabre knew that the police were closing in on him, that they were torturing him. The engaging smile of Marie de Montrésor, as though nothing had ever happened, was destructive. Fabre at last bit his nails and was shaken in his supernal insolence. Those four girls, absolute fools, smelling of bread and butter, as Byron has it, dressed like high-school pretties, would have made a lovely packet for the gay lads of the Argentine and Paraná districts.

"What shall I do?" he asked Pressensé.

"Oh I couldn't tell you anything. Me, Xaver de Pressensé? How can my dullness illuminate talents such as you possess? Decrepit, irresolute, superseded, I am the shame of my species. I intend taking a course of twenty success lessons from you instead, my good friend. It will pay better than any other course."

"I don't like cheap irony."

"Don't then, I don't like stupidity, either." Pressensé then stood up. "Now that you have landed yourself in a first-class mess, you victor of Amalfi, let me tell you this business goes on only if I am its unquestioned leader. Otherwise, I shut this place and go back to my brother's palace. I have been driven to this by an inner demon. I can cast him out and spend my old age quietly. You can't rise without money, so you obey me. You got cocky after crushing a bedbug. You are like a Mussolini who equates Addis Ababa and London."

Pressensé took the train for Béziers. He hoped that Onésime might not turn down help in the mortal struggle with Lévy-Ruhmann. When he got there, he was astonished to see the whole family reunited. Jacques, Foulques, their rich wives, Onésime, Cécile, the two mothers, Gisèle even, were present. Praise be, he had come upon a council of war. The gathering season was approaching. He saw representatives of the labour unions present. They came out of the conference room speaking of a rather favourable contract offered

for that season by the hitherto obdurate Onésime. It was clear that the Renouviers were making sure there would be no labour mutiny during the battle. De Pressensé wormed out of the servants the news that Gisèle had left Rashi-Mordecai. Apart from the despised François, they had no hostages with Lévy-Ruhlmann.

There were also present the fathers-in-law of Jacques and Foulques. The Belgian one alone was richer than Lévy-Ruhlmann. De Pressensé could not but admire the two years' patient build-up of his forces by Onésime. "A peasant knows how to wait."

He saw come in and out, Pressard-Monod, a talented counsellor of state of Brussels, the first sober commercial lawyer of Paris, and an Italian jurist who was advising in a strident voice that pierced the panels, on the recovery of Contessa Gisèle's estate. De Pressensé now knew that long before he could gun for Lévy-Ruhlmann's money, a Macedonian phalanx would have formed its squares, and would be first in the field with a completed strategy.

He told the butler he would call later but left no card. He went back and his brain gyrated faster than the train wheels. He must trap Stéphane the painter, and so achieve vengeance on both him and Lévy-Ruhlmann by a scheme soon prepared. It was his only move. Then he snapped his fingers. He had a perfect scheme, forgot all the others, and fell in love with it.

Stéphane received a letter from a freethinkers' journal, enclosing another from a Father Fabre, a priest still ordained, but on the brink of a purifying movement in the Church. He wanted a series of detailed wash drawings for a book he would soon launch, *Rome Serves Reaction*. The drawings must be biting, frightening, argumentative. Would M. Sabatier, whose work he had admired, do this series reasonably? Stéphane, flattered by recognition, poor, and anxious as a lifetime nonbelieving Protestant to gore Rome, acceded. He made an appointment for June 30 at his studio.

In the meantime, Aboudaram had been shifted to Nice so that Stéphane should not by any chance see him with Fabre and smell something. De Pressensé also confined himself to his caverns for a while to guard against accidents. Fabre had to avoid him for a week. The conspiracy was carefully arranged.

Stéphane, gay, refreshed by his holiday, having a smooth life for once, with Simone, and having exchanged badinage and fast - small talk for hours with Cécile, arrived at Marseille prepared to punch the artistic stuffings out of the Babylonian Women.

That evening there called on him Father Athanase Fabre. He was worried and lankier than ever. His cassock, though, was impeccable. Everything was finely bleached and ironed, the silk biretta glossed.

"I am Father Fabre," he began, "a priest who may be unfrocked. The mind is in chains in the Church, you understand, M. Sabatier. Afraid to support the contradictions which are presented by science . . ."

"The object of your visit, if you please?" Stéphane was in no mood for radical bromides. He wanted to draw.

"This," Fabre explained. "The Roman Curia uses Jewish agents everywhere. In Rome the go-between of the Palazzo Venezia and the Vatican is a Jewish count, Rashi-Mordecai Lévy-Ruhlmann, now the Conte di Colmaro. Do you know of him?"

"Why, yes," Stéphane was disturbed, "but what is your subject?"

"This, I want a series of drawings showing the relation of the see of Rome with the great banking companies from the day of the Fuggers down. Medici, Fugger, will make good woodcuts in the thick Dürer manner; the financial relations of the seventeenth century should be in the baroque style, like the veil statues at Naples; for the eighteenth in the brutal direct style of Hogarth or Rowlandson; and for the present day, why not take as your model the anti-clerical sketches of your co-religionist (by origin) M. Abel Faivre?" Fabre was careful. He had just studied this "line" in the library and hoped he had made no slip.

"There is no insuperable difficulty," Stéphane told him. "What are you proposing to pay, for, say, a series of twelve sketches?"

"Oh not more than four thousand francs. I am poor."

This is pretty good, Stéphane thought. Why does he think it mean? "I accept, Father."

"Good," said Fabre. "I shall consult with you on the themes. Of course Judas Iscariot, the Wandering Jew, the brothel keepers of Rome, these are standard. But we should take some sinister figure, say, here in Marseille, some capitalist, I think, as a model of evil. He would be before us, he is graphic. It is as easy to use a plutocratic model for nothing as to pay a poor nude five francs an hour."

"My wife poses for me for nothing."

"Good, and make it legitimate for her attractions to lead you

to the inevitable! Excellent. My dear artist friend, I have an appointment. I shall see you to-morrow. I leave you a thousand francs as deposit."

Simone clapped her hands. "My love, your chance at last. But make those *gonaches* in the country. Here in Marseille you see social crime in the same mood recollected as experienced. In the country the vices of brilliant men look so shabby, compared to sun and soil, that they appear more horrible than ever; they are heightened. You need that."

Stéphane reflected, "I shall portray these dozen pictures with an intensity that shall astound everybody. The Church shall be a mere point of departure. It shall appear as the armory of the robber caste. I shall take their beliefs, rites, rules, and interweave them with the plottings of the capitalists. How well I know them! I, alone among artists. I shall show them Christ's dear words now stilled by forsworn priests."

Pressensé chuckled. "First I will twist this fallen enemy to my service. When you go, artistic boob, your family's comeback is over. No one can plumb my scheme but I. Fabre, too, is in the dark. All of you."

Fabre was relieved. "I have planted the appropriate ideas in his vain head. He will suffuse his paintings with Lévy-Ruhlmann. When we execute our coup, they will look to him as its author. That *must* be our plan."

Aboudaram was confident. "I once convinced Stéphane I was his friend. I will play on his sympathies and flatter him. Strike, for I have the subtle conscience of my breed; the gross beast is on the altar."

Lévy-Ruhlmann was dubious. "Rashi-Mordecai has lost the play. Out with this Fascist fool François. I need sinew. I can carry no fat. The Renouviers are allied to millions through their dolts. Fool that I am. Last year I should have followed my instincts. Onésime my administrator. Steady, he would have served. I checkmate twopenny Fabre and let the Renouviers grow strong."

Onésime was crowing. "Cécile, we have won. We can now buy ten judges to his three. Our nitwit brothers have proved better financiers with ski and tennis than we with our big ledgers."

Cécile was radiant as when a girl. "We have done well by our help. I shall never forget that speech at Port-Vendres. What

faith! We shall be rich and liberal. Monderoy would laugh at that but it's possible, I'm sure. Solange and our Stéphane shall feel proud of their parents."

So the eight protagonists took up their positions. Like the Hindu wise, blind men of hackneyed instance, each felt one part of the elephant and decided he had a perfect grasp of its nature. The eight actors had their own cues but not the other scripts.

*An Epic Fortnight*

THE First of July was a grey day, oppressive, humid, discouraging. The Sabatier menage was a mixture of thrown-about clothing, moth-eaten monk's cloth couch covers, stained rep bedcovers, errant coffee pots, mats, torn window shades, flung-about girdles and stockings with ladders haunting bedposts, socks with holes out, the smell of washing soap, and other aspects of the perfect atelier. It echoed to the yawns of Simone awaiting the trudging of Stéphane bringing the bread and cold victuals for a lazy lunch.

She heard his steps on the stairs and, as they inhabited the attic, presented herself nude at the door to welcome her adorer appropriately. The tramping gentleman proved to be none other than M. Carolus Picavet, leading art dealer of the South. Sixty, with the Charlemagne white beard, he reassured, "Mademoiselle, I was sorry to interrupt your modelling, pray return to your seat."

She knew he knew it was otherwise, but with the air of a hostess the naked lady invited the bearded gentleman to their only good chair, while she slipped on a kimono.

When she came out he said, "Mademoiselle, you have a *beauté du diable*. You remember when it was the rage of painters? Rest at ease, it will be again."

Simone said, "That was in the days, was it not, when degeneration was the religion of Paris? Baudelaire and his damned women, Tristan Corbière who wrecked emotion with coffee and absinthe."

Picavet added with nostalgia, "Paul Verlaine and his cult of the tramp sung to the most musical sounds a poet can know. I think of it with interest."

Simone did not agree. "The name that clings to me is Rimbaud. He saw the cause of the people despite his Latin veils, his diabolic dream. Did you ever meet him?"

"No," said Picavet regretfully, "I read only one book of his with professional interest, *A Season in the Inferno*! He spent a year with the wits of Paris, with all that nervous city offers. A season in hell,

he called their captiousness, envy, hatred of creation, their desire to hurt as a life pose. They killed him alive. The English are kinder. They killed Keats young. But, as a wasp stings to paralyse a spider so as to feed its imago, so the French paralyse a fresh talent into degeneracy or still worse, the Academy." He was happy with these wheezy reflections and sleeked his beard.

Simone, now unembarrassed, asked, "Did you wish to see my husband, M. Sabatier?"

"Why yes, I am honoured." He bowed to Madame. "I am staging an impromptu exhibition for the benefit of a congress of art critics. I had seen some of your husband's paintings and even sold two. Could he scrape a few together and oblige me soon?"

"Willingly, I will speak for him. He has four painted in Nîmes and three, which he repudiates, in Carpentras, one amateur masterpiece in his early career at Saint-Jean-du-Gard, and one he does not want to exhibit called, *The Popular Front's Delicatessen*."

"Before he comes, let me glance at least at the last."

She brought out the canvases. He looked at them rapidly, and agreed to exhibit the eight available. "I must leave. Bring them over to me, or I will send for them. The varnishing must take place at once."

Simone was excited. There was no trace of jealousy in the prior recognition of Stéphane. Picavet was a Maecenas as well as a dealer. Why did he speak, though, of a season in the Inferno? Was he preparing them for a hostile reception? No matter, exhibited he must be. When Stéphane returned, Simone found pretences for his going on a long errand to buy week-end supplies of food. She got him out just as Picavet's carters came for the pictures.

For two days she was in a strange state but, for Simone, that was scarcely news. Stéphane never looked at old canvases. They were tucked away in universal chaos, so he did not miss them. Then Simone piloted him to the Picavet galleries, where he saw what she had done.

"Little viper and traitor," he shadow-boxed her ear, "hang up my dirty linen as well as my discarded paintings."

"Be quiet. They shall see and worship."

*The Popular Front's Delicatessen* had the crowds. It showed the people of France under a threatening sky, sable clouded. He seemed to comprise thousands, suggest millions, in the medium-sized picture. It was difficult to see how it was done. One could



count the miniature, finely rendered, animated, individual figures into several hundreds but the miracle of their multiplication remained. They were presented exactly as Breughel gives his armies and cartloads of skeletons, skulls, and divided bones, in his *Carnival of Death*. Here too, heads and bodies wandered apart: tongues and legs sought their own roads. These people and their limbs were busy at various trades.

A part of the crowd milled around a scaffold, where the guillotine had done its work. It cut off the head of a sad cock, whose model, Lévy-Ruhlmann, could not be mistaken. For this reason Stéphane had not exhibited. The head dripped coins from its opened neck, for it had never contained a drop of blood. On a high platform, overlooking the scene, the Gallic cock, with tricolour pants *à la sans-culotte*, was crowing triumphantly. Beside him was the American eagle, but he had one claw bound with paper money. The executioner was masked. He had on a richly embroidered domino in red, the hammer and sickle on each side, the border containing a miniature woven chain of letters like the Arabic which deciphered as, "Workers of the world, unite."

Underneath the scaffold were burrowing brown- and black-shirted rats, ready to bite the exulting mob. Small French figures, in tailored suits, were helping the Fascist rats out of their holes into the open.

It was an analysis, a prophecy, and a warning, all in one. It failed to sell. What rich man would buy it? Stéphane was bitter but clear. "I shall have to wait until I am a 'classic' and my social threat is embodied in the archives, before I shall be bought. How wonderful are the cultured. They are like a butcher who deals in carrion, exclusively. Hyenas of taste; they worship a dead Diderot, a dead Rabelais. For them everything is history, for us everything is life."

The critics of the leading Southern journals were presented to him, so were the critics of Paris art journals, including the advanced ones. They recognized that he had more promise than any other local painter. Some even hazarded that he had already "arrived."

Those who knew his earlier exhibits regretted that he had "abandoned his promising fantastic strain; a contribution to the beauty of symbols, to their unexpectedness." A Paris pontiff told him to "beware of enslaving yourself to an easily repeated formula, full of vulgar non-æsthetic antitheses." The representative of a perfectly

printed and critical futurist magazine, warned him that "your treatment of the class struggle is perhaps not æsthetic material at all, but if it is, its treatment should not be *simpliste*. That is dangerous, it will lead you from paint to oratory."

Stéphane laughed. "Exactly the advice of the old straw-hat aristocrat of Saint-Jean-du-Gard. 'Monsieur, I sense in your style something dangerous. Be prudent.'"

Then the Tower of Babel was built in sixty stories. One critic told him to concentrate on technique. "The Left paints politics because it is feeble in finish." Another, a radical, sneered, "Your highly finished effects give an illusion of beauty but painters know how easy that is. Do not paint to impress the laity with miniature delicacy. That is inverted journalism, artistic demagoguery." No sooner was this talent gone than another began. "Monsieur, paint is the analysis of light on mass. Where are your cubes? You see like a house painter."

Another, a lady, looked through a lorgnette. "I prefer the three paintings at Carpentras."

Stéphane wheeled about, they were the remains of his sterile epoch. "Will you buy them?"

"Yes," she answered, "I am buying them for a San Francisco department-store owner. He buys nothing painted before 1934."

"Deal with M. Picavet, then."

"I shall."

So the analysts, the cynics, the sincere dissenters, the opponents, the whole breed, babbled and insulted or praised for reasons so foreign to the vision and motives of Stéphane that he became sick, but robustly sick. Picavet came up and whispered to Simone, "It is Rimbaud's *A Season in the Inferno* of which I spoke. It is an age of journalism of torture. A thousand francs are invested in commentary to one in creation."

Stéphane was too proud to answer them. Besides, who has sixty answers to sixty directions? And what can a painter answer with except with more paintings? He knew they agreed, for the most part, that he had talent, power, originality and passion. The rest didn't worry him.

"I'll be the Michelangelo of the proletariat yet, when I know enough, when I can hurl the thunderbolts I control. The wine-grower will answer the tongue painters with his brush, wielded by an honest arm."

He stood in front of his painting, repeating the words aloud. Beside him was an astoundingly ugly man. His lips fell away into the far reaches of his face, his hair was straight, black, long, unkempt. He wore cracked spectacles with large steel frames. Yet his voice, that one would surely predict as fit only for croaks, had a musical quality that must have seemed the more beautiful as it was so unexpected. His French was sibilant, warm, its nasal peninsulas surrounded by delicate consonants. He washed away error by a clean flow of thought.

"I judge you have been attacked before, Monsieur? And with good reason. Your work has a serious weakness. I can see that you are no part of any movement. These are all your ideas, worked out by yourself. Why don't you join the workers' movements, be active, and learn how they think?"

"Not me," Stéphane was direct. "I don't want to take on a shipload of slogans. I don't want to be explicit: I think in representations. I tried to read a Russian novel the other day. I cannot think it describes the way Communists really feel about what they do. It's too summary. The artist is strange. For better or worse he thinks he's sort of unique. Two fellows will never see the same marine landscape under socialism, capitalism, or any scheme. I would join up if it didn't take up so much time. Damn the discipline, I'm not afraid of that. You get pretty good swabs of discipline when you work for a boss. That's Bohemian rot. Every artist works in some scaffolding, that's what determines his shape and limits. But the time! Committees, handing out leaflets, always doing a job you're pretty bad at, and neglecting one you're good at. I am a painter, crayon boy."

The soft voice urged, "Your arguments were spotty but you're a young man. Join our artists' movement, then. It is pretty independent of the other sections in most of what it does. Not entirely, of course. Then it wouldn't be social."

He told Stéphane of the A.E.A.R., the national association of Left painters and writers. Its guiding spirit for painters was the venerated Signac whose work scarcely prepared one for this enthusiasm of his. If ever an artist was "pure" it was he. The roll call of painters included much of the significant talent of France.

"I don't know," Stéphane still held out. "Of course, they're right. But . . ."

"You prefer the infernal chorus that comes from critics, journalists,

egoists, connoisseurs, Maecenases, that collection of imps that have just tormented you. Stay with them, then. You must choose their company—for you must live—or ours.”

“No critics among you?” smiled Stéphane.

“Of course not,” said the rational spirit, “there are no stone saints there. We have God’s own quantity of backbiting and dogmatism. When men become perfect, this world won’t be interesting. Maybe socialism will make them more cussed but in a grander style. Join our crowd and if on the whole it does not add to life, resign. It’s better than this . . .”

“Carper’s congress,” Stéphane agreed.

On July 3, at night, Simone and he visited a section made up of likeable fellows with a perfect chairman who kept the associated artists in good order and good humour. Stéphane was swept into the demands of the section, and he who had worried about time was volunteering for various quick decorative jobs required for propaganda. He went home that night aflame. Simone was in a hoop-la mood and they danced home to the beckoning mock cautions of gendarmes.

“Stéphane, you remember culture at Picavet’s. La, la, the nightmare.”

“It will make my work just grand,” he said, satisfied. “I’ll have a circle of friends. I’ll have a few shabby critics and some crabby critics, but at least you can distribute good kicks all around.”

Simone commented cheerfully, “It’s glorious to feel art isn’t a sacerdotal business as the sensitives think. I can just see Michelangelo on the scaffold working with plasterers, and Rubens with varnishers in his Antwerp factory. Or Rembrandt gambling in tulips. Real fellows.”

Stéphane laughed. “I can also see the thousands of café artists on their scaffolds painting fat monks drinking beer or beefy huntsmen. The vision still is the big job.”

On July 5, an imperative request came from the Popular Front Committee of the Bouches-du-Rhône pointing out that a procession of 150,000 members of Left parties would be held in Marseille on the National Fête, July 14, to celebrate the consummation of the Popular Front. All celebrations were suspended elsewhere in the department so as to concentrate forces in the principal city. They desperately needed artists for banners, insignias, floats, placards, streamers, costumes. Simone and Stéphane were considered as from Arles. The

were in charge of a section of the work. A division of poets, sculptors, painters and novelists was to march before the savants and scientists.

At the workshops of the trade-co-operatives, designers and writers worked top speed in droves. Two hundred filled the ateliers. Poets lampooned the Fascists, journalists wrote concise statements of aims for placards, lithographers turned out trenchant posters, sculptors were modelling quick clay images, mostly grotesques. Stéphane, head of a division, re-aroused his business abilities. He painted a banner in which Marseille sailors besieged a galleon in which were capitalist shipowners, Fabre, Fraissinet, Lévy-Ruhlmann, shown as gargoyles. Like the gargoyles of Notre-Dame of Paris, they were blatantly popular concepts.

But Simone won more acclaim. She designed forty-foot-long streamers, carried on poles. The young girls had streamers denouncing the late age of marriage and too-long-deferred motherhood. The symbol chosen was the Madonna working in the sweatshop of Herod & Co. Ltd. and denied the right to marry Joseph. The unemployed were chained by the Jupiter of Capitalism to the massed rocks of fatuity, their creative urges blocked. Children were shown, their faces transformed, beginning at the ears and the feet, into mean animals (cleverly suggesting pickpockets) because of their slum upbringing. There were many more. In eight days (with help) she accomplished four streamers, quite finished.

Every night, after sixteen hours' work, stopping only for bread, the two artists fell half dead in their little flat and the concierge had to follow instructions, to open the door and roust them out. The heat was relentless, day and night. The fevered artists were on the point of collapse. So were all the zealots of the party. The poor poets never desisted. They were forever tearing up poems because they lacked a sufficient acerbity, or were too erudite in style. Surrealist poets abandoned their slick unintelligibilities. Strained journalists wrote simply. Detached artists abandoned landscapes, all for the people's fight. The newspapers owned by the rich were furious. Their stock in trade was the monopoly of culture. Here nearly the whole articulate class had shifted to the service of the poor.

At last the great day had come. The people of the department rolled in. Simone and Stéphane were ordered to march with the procession of herdsmen and wool combers of Arles. The marshals of the *cortège*, with red bands for the communists, red bands with three arrows for the socialists, and tricolour bands for the radicals, were

busy on a dozen streets, massing their contingents at points of departure.

The procession got under way with a banner of Stéphane's. It was held aloft by the guard of honour, twenty Italian teachers in exile from the Fascist tyranny. They passed the reviewing stand on the Rue de Noailles now covered with mimosas. All the marchers in line carried a sprig in their buttonholes. The mimosa was a favourite in that land where it is the love of lyrists, engravers and the people. Then followed the children carrying banners of hope for young France. They marched first, for they would be the first fatigued. Women's societies carried flags and streamers, products of their busy needles and embroidery frames.

Then followed the exiles, massed. Twelve thousand Italians bore aloft the gonfalons of their provinces. Nut-brown, stocky Piedmontese, light, dolichoblond mountaineers from Domodossola, the stout powerful Lucchese, tragic-looking Venetians, thin-lipped, elegant Florentines, only a few Romans, large processions of Neapolitans, roaring and singing their hackneyed pieces, *Santa Lucia* and *Mari, Maria, Addio a Surrent*, all blasted by their funeral bands, now hired for a gayer occasion. The quick-eyed Sicilians wore their high-crowned hats, wore knee breeches and white stockings too, and were roundly cheered by the colour-loving *marseillais*. The Italian procession was a thicket of banners, all silk. The men wore large flower garlands, magpie coloured. Their art was old-fashioned but rich and garish. Caricatures of Mussolini formed an encyclopædia of those distortions of a face that can be shaped by hatred.

The cosmopolitan town showed all its foreigners in turn. Greeks and Bulgarians, Croats and Spaniards, Corsicans, Moors, clad in national costumes, joined the tribute to the People's Front of France, their last remaining hope in the West. Their varied national musics were thumped out popularly. There was no refinement of rhythm, so the crowd easily caught on to the tunes.

It was noon. The parade stopped at a signal. At every corner, the heralds read the names of the martyrs since July 14, 1934: strikers shot by the police, youngsters killed by the Croix de Feu, men who perished in the concentration camps of Hitler or at Lipari in Italy, the Asturian miners, the victims of the Glavchina at Belgrade, of the Iron Guard, of the Bulgarian dictatorship, the coolies of Yen-Bay in Tonkin. As each nation's victims were called out, their delegation stood at attention. When the roll call was ended, ten

thousand red flags, five thousand French flags, were dipped simultaneously. They were held down for a minute's silence and lifted aloft slowly.

The floats of the history of Provence and Languedoc came on. These were designed by sculptors. They were fitting, some were inspired. The life of the long-braided Celt, under his tribal chiefs, mirrored the conflict of the poor and rich among the barbarians. The Ligurian peoples came, the Greeks embarked at Massilia as helots, forced to colonize France. Hannibal passed over the land. The Gallic people were shown as driven by the Roman conquerors to build the beautiful monuments of antiquity. The Visigoths forced them to demolish as the Romans had forced them to build.

The labourers and peasants were shown as welcoming the Saracen under whom their lot was somewhat easier. The feudal system was depicted by a large model of iron circles, one larger than the other, from vassal to lord, from fief to liege lord, liege lord to suzerain, lord to king or duke; the largest circle on the outside was constantly being spun about by abbots and bishops; on top, on a throne, the Pope, Innocent III.

The Renaissance was stripped by showing Erasmus in a cloister, reading, while the German peasants were shot down in 1525. The religious wars were illustrated by bailiffs stabbing peasants with pikes to collect rents for Catholic noble and Protestant noble alike. Then came wax figures of Voltaire and Diderot, hurling lightning into the dark skies of superstition, but at the same time holding on to their portfolios with their left hands, marked 40,000 *livres de rente* for Voltaire, and for the poorer Diderot, 4,600 *livres de rente*.

The Bastille, in papier mâché, was twenty feet high; its assault was cheered to the hoarse cries of the entire city. The *marseillais* entering Paris with their song (to become the French hymn) got even wilder applause. Robespierre and Saint-Just on the guillotine, victims of the *bourgeoisie*, called out laments as vivid as though they had just died. The Napoleonic wars were represented honestly. The float showed the despot, dressed as a fisherman, with a fisher's carving knife, carrying in his nets more Germans, Italians, Belgians, than Frenchmen. This was a deliberate touch, to convince the few followers of Rostand and other Bonapartists that the Grand Wars were not the work of Frenchmen, but mostly of purchased serfs. The last scene was that of the first Commune of France, at Lyon in 1832,

the rebellion of the *canuts*, the silk weavers. But what followed was quaint.

History professors at the University of Aix and Marseille and of the *lycées* of the department carried box signs pointing out that the floats necessarily oversimplified history! The oppressing classes were not static! Each as it developed embodied a progressive principle that was leading up to the ultimate supremacy of the workers. Nothing could be more charming and unexpected than the scholar's solicitude for historical delicacy and truth, on that torrid day, in a mass demonstration.

The procession after four weary hours wound up with corporations of carpenters associated with sculptors, house painters with artists, the clerks' union with writers, and best of all, florists with poets. Professors marched with parents' unions. All France was one. Class was abolished in common work.

So it seemed in the procession. So it was not in fact. Two classes were missing. One, the rich, who had fled the city's heat; the others, the submerged tenth, the indifferent poor, the wastrels, the criminals. These were at their cabins, scattered by the thousand along the coast down to Bandol, the Ciotat, Cassis. The floating mass of *marseillais*, of the Celto-Greek type, mercurial, quarrelsome, having imported vain pride from the Arabs, quick address from the Italians, with trumpet voices, the famed *moricauds*, sold their votes and had no interest in politics on any other basis. The rich were at their villas, the *bastides* of the middle classes were less filled (many of them had stayed for the parade), the *cabanons* of the wretches were crowded with their slum population, anxious for hill and sea.

A few remained to jeer. When the slow-footed mountaineers from the Sainte-Baume came on, the café hangers-on insulted them as clods; when the black-currant brandy growers of Cassis marched, the consumers of their wares sneered at the peasants. Even the cowboys from Les Saintes-Maries were laughed at by some cheap-John dudes. The Arlésienne girls, slender, straight, got male admiration, although the puffy, housewifely, fat, vivacious Marseille girls tried to pull their boys away.

The day was a dream of variety. So mixed are the peoples of the Rhône delta that every township presents another physical type. The whole sweep of the Roman Empire is felt. As the procession broke up, Simone and her happy man, tired, sick, still managed to extract pencils to sketch. What an opportunity! At least a hundred



differentiated peoples, all seen when animated and jostling, the play of their features complete! The streets were a madhouse. The paraders had brought families. A million people crowded about a square mile, for everyone wanted to be near the main districts, the port. At nightfall, the streets were cleared for dancing and long tables set up by committees for each district. Here a "Feast of Fraternity" was improvised, lanterns were strung, three hundred pretty bad dance orchestras set up on casual platforms. The city, baked, one hundred degrees of heat at midnight, was a gallery of noises unbroken, the notes of each band invading the street of the other. The clatter of talk at the tables (dovetailed to run two or three hundred feet) and oratory made the city a very Philadelphia, with *agapes*, the love feasts of the early Christians, but how much more noisy!

The lovers dragged each other across the streets in their dances; each sitting down at times so as to invite a comradely cutter-in and to get a five-minute rest. The other artists, who thought themselves dead with fatigue, were perfectly able to go through hours of *pernochs*, fireworks, speeches, rumbas, biguines, fox trots, talk, toasts, coffee, eat mountains of bread, drink oceans of wine, yell, "The revolution." Effigies of Tardieu were burned on each block as the bands struck up Chopin's *Funeral March* jazzed. The communists had made the old town a mass of scarlet. Green Bengal lights gave a strange glare as the white houses reflected the lurid hues.

Stéphane left at three in the morning. He had been weak when he got to Marseille and since then had lived on his nerves. He staggered up the stairs. Neither had the strength to open the door. They pushed together and fell in. They laughed as they rested on the floor. In a few minutes they dragged themselves to chairs next to the window. Their tired eyeballs were fixed on the roseate city. Underneath them the Cours Pierre-Puget was dense with noise. They tried to rise but fatigue bent their bones. They held hands, wearily smiling at each other, their heads reclined full back.

After an hour they were still awake. They could not sleep until the excitements of the day became part of them forever. The fireworks came up, a star shower, then a fairy castle in three colours. They were set off on the mount of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde. They seemed to burst through their window. Wits downstairs yelled together, "*Ob la belle blanche, la belle rouge, la plus belle bleuroublanche.*" The last fireworks were of Marianne, the Republic. The crowd howled, "*Vive la France.*"

Stéphane came under the goat's zodiac. He struggled up, got the golden laurel wreath that Simone wore in the procession, set it against her wonderful profile, turned her about and worshipped her. He kissed her and held her breasts taut. She was illimitably happy. She snatched a small tricolour flag, stripped her blouse and stood at the open window. Her brow crowned, her breasts a public show, she stridently called downstairs the sobriquet of Arles: "*Mater omnium Gallorum*"—mother of all the French. The crowd laughed, it knew this Latin tag. Hundreds looked up and faunishly cheered the person of the Republic, a Cybele of the blessings of Liberty. "Like the face on a ten-franc piece," shouted a happy citizen. Behind her, Stéphane, for the first time, gaily saluted the crowd, while wearing a velvet artist's béret. He encouraged their cheers and jeers, mock adoration, and obscene but sympathetic and overfull comments. They closed the window happy and slept perfectly.

*Stéphane  
Rips the Scarlet Woman's  
Petticoat*

THE excitement and novelty of the Popular Front demonstration wore out. Several days later the stocky Comrade Monderoy, who had been speaker of honour, invited from Béziers, called at the studio.

"I come to offer thanks for your banners. They were either the most compelling, or at least, the best propaganda of any. As to their execution I say nothing, for I know nothing. I thought they were beautiful, especially considering the haste with which they were done. If you pardon me, I think Comrade Simone Lamouroux had a more direct message." He walked up and down the studio in a manner that told them to be still and await the rest of his remarks.

"Sabatier, you are the brother of Onésime Sabatier. Your brother, like all those that marry money, has married the cause of money as well as the lady. He never has shown half the generosity of his wife. He is bending backward to show the Renouviers that their steward is never crossed in his husbandly duty by the former vine labourer. He has offered us a better working arrangement than his competitors for this season. But I learn that Mme Cécile favoured a still better arrangement, conceding absolute unionization to the *gavaches*. Now you know that the unionization of all migratory labour, Spanish, Italian, *Gavache*, is essential if wages in Southern France are to reach a human level. There aren't enough Frenchmen to go around and if the taxes on young couples continue, there never will be. The hypocrites talk of our biological collapse when they mean fiscal crime. Now, your brother knows the situation and so offers us an excellent six-month contract, after which it will be take it or leave it. I have had you assigned a disagreeable task, Stéphane Sabatier. You must go this gathering season to the wine country

and help to organize your fellow labourers. I count you still as a wineworker. Once one, always one."

"Don't worry, Comrade Monderoy," Stéphane said, weighing his words. "Don't mind if I sound a bit oily. But my mother, even, used to teach us from the Scripture that Jesus commanded the believer to leave his family to follow Him. So with me. I am a brother if ever there was one. But I am a worker too. If my rich sister-in-law can be generous, I can be just. I have to go to the Avignon country to do a set of *gouaches* or perhaps etchings, depending on the nature of the material, on papal history. It is a commission I must fulfil to live. But during the gathering season, in August, I will be with you."

For a month the lovers lived in the land of vegetables and fruit, the Carpentras region. They made their home in the happy town of Montoux, given over to strawberries from April to June, to raspberries and black currants thereafter, and to *petits pois* as often as the hot-piped soil and patient liming and fertilizing could bring up the fat pods, under the careful shelter of beautifully bricked walls.

For the first week, as Simone expressed it, they ate the scenery. They visited Avignon to study its crenellated walls, to be used as a decoration in his pictures as a filigree barrier against knowledge. The Palace of the Popes was often sketched, a mass out of the Holy Mass, a throwing together of taxes. The peasant's life of the fourteenth century was transmuted into its walls; his health so undermined by its tribute that the plague counted him an easy prospect. Its bulk, the high dome of the church of the Doms, the tombs of pontiffs servile to the French king, the memories of intense immorality, made it a perfect theme for Father Fabre's pictures. Villeneuve-lès-Avignon added its Gothic testimony, even more luxurious.

But it was the sense of well-being of the countryside, so innocent in its products, so delicate, that brought out fantasies as rich as the land was abundant in products. They tramped in fields of tomatoes, cauliflowers, string beans, wax beans and flageolets. Every field built up their skins with satisfactions.

The sun in September is nearly at its apogee down there. They did not want for its rays. Shadows were still near pure black, the outline cut with a Toledo blade. The grand shadow of the Mont Ventoux came over them. It made Simone regretful and tender. Melons, full fleshed and juiced, were gathered in the town of Cavaillon. They attended its fête, the crop was good, all was good.

They went back to Carpentras. They were rested by its majestic plane trees, *donjons*, its truffle market now under way. Besides, this little town had a museum with hundreds of tableaux and thousands of medals; it was good for checking up detail work.

His first etching showed the Pope at Avignon, elegant, gay surrounded by the whole of his cardinal collegium, many of them reproduced in fine detail. The Pope overlooked the region in which Stéphane worked, laid out like a chequer-board, each one of its sixty-four squares raising a different fruit, vegetable, seed, berry, acorn, nut tree, melon. "The earth is the Lord's and" (to paraphrase) "the increase thereof." The ears of corn stood at attention; barley wispily acknowledged the reign of the priests. In the wheat fields, Ruth, in the shape of Simone but wearing Hypatia's robes, looked up defiantly at the Avignon watchtowers and their illustrious company. The cardinals were divided according to faces: there were ten groups of seven each, luxury, vice, gluttony, scholarship, statesmanship, ambition, pride, taste, craft, superstition. The ensemble of human qualities necessary, equally to prolong and defile a secular organization, was so exhibited.

Stéphane knew that these hard and fast categories of the Church were impossible. Craft and superstition, ambition and pride, taste and luxury, are conjoined in the same man; sometimes even all ten attributes find their places in one man. For that reason, he attempted to shade the faces within each of the categories so that they tapered gradually into the next. That was Simone's idea; she retouched. "A spectrum of the soul" was her idea. Where a mere Leonardo had picked the psyche of a John the Baptist or a Gioconda, her Stéphane, naturally, could cover seventy souls in their subtle gradations and inwardnesses.

The second picture showed the Council of Constance. The waters of that celebrated lake were covered with silver flakes, thirty of them, of course. The heretic, Huss, had a hungry look. His body was covered with butter, for he was ready to be burned. The eyes of the bishops were leaden with fatigue. The Great Schism was remedied. The light of the stake was lurid above the streets of Constance, its grey brothels merry with the relieved episcopacy, the doors full of jugglers who played with the golden balls—three, predicting the rise of the Medicis.

So the history of the Church was symbolized. The wiseacre journalist, Piccolomini, as pope, sat with the sacred college at a

wide oak table, on which were laurelled pigs' heads and flagons of Orvieto wines; he sat scribbling bawdy and cynical commentaries on the elect of God. His treasurer was picking his pocket, while he acted so deucedly clever.

Whether Stéphane made manifest the polished Latinity of Cardinal Bembo, the thirst for extravagant and tax-born beauty of Leo X, the intense eyes of Cardinal Caraffa, sponsor of Counter Reformation, the monumental excitements of Sixtus V, Fléchier at Nîmes covering the dragonnades against the Protestants under flowers of rhetoric, the liberal popes of the eighteenth century temporizing with the enlightenment; there was always at the base of the pictures the gatherers of Peter's pence as it once was, of stipend and benefice, of simony and indulgences. Above them was a ceiling made up of the mosaics of the doctrines of the Council of Trent. In this cellar of the Faith there was one recurrent theme—money, one recurrent plunderer—the image of Lévy-Ruhlmann. The obsession followed Stéphane's one great flash of business experience; it covered his artistic retreat.

Lévy-Ruhlmann was not merely treasurer. He had sons, much like him, though their faces were modified with the centuries. For example, in the seventeenth century they were in the ghetto, in the eighteenth century in the Bourse or countinghouse, in the nineteenth, bankers. But for the twentieth century, his last etching was definite in its implications. No one could mistake the enemy. He was no longer symbolic, it was an exact portrait of the man, in his present clothing.

The twelfth picture showed a sincere pope issuing a humane encyclical on the miseries of labour. Under his throne the factory workers of the papal lands, those at Łódź, Katowice, Essen, Lyon, the Borinage, Turin, Montreal, were a jellied mass, each trying to wiggle amid the packed crowd, to hear the words of mercy. In front of the throne, with plenty of room, stood the cardinals, the head of which was like Athanase Fabre. Each cardinal represented an appropriate oppression. The Mexican primate held a Mexican parrot in a cage, the Primate of Tunis had a baboon, bridled and leashed, the Cardinal of Lyon had a silk weaver hasped on to a loom, whose cloth carried an elongation of the eyes he was wasting in its fabrication, the Archbishop of Olmütz decorated a reined donkey with the floral head-dress of the Moravians; and so the seventy auditors severally enslaved either beast or man.

Underneath the pack, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann, sat in the synagogue,

the foundation of the church. Across its ark of the law were overlaid black spectacles for, in the cathedral of Chartres, the synagogue is represented as blind. The black spectacles are rimmed with gold. Lévy-Ruhlmann turns the church on a gramophone turn-table. The saturnine glance of the Avignon popes is gone. The church, her melody still independent of capitalism, is nevertheless turning on the economic turn-table.

Simone had no sympathy with the carry-over of Huguenot ideas. "You never show Calvin burning Servetus, or the English hounding Irish Catholics or the cruelties of the Huguenot nobility in the Religious Wars." She was displeased with the distorted thesis, though it was served with genius. For her, truth was less patent. Her doting on their differences made for a slight coolness. But whatever she said, his limitations were of experience, not imagination. His popular types were the three central races of the mountain districts from which his family sprang. Either he showed the people as mountaineers, Alpine types, people that live on granite, or as *causse-nards*, plateau dwellers, reticent, mournful, folk of limestone stretches, or as Cevenols, those that dwell in the micaceous valleys towards the plain, tenacious, hard-working, saving, imaginative. The cardinals were taken from the seaboard Provençals, of pure Mediterranean type.

Religious heroes like Huss were given an Armenoid caste. All Northerners were made tall, long-headed, blond, with grey or blue eyes. All financial and mercantile characters were Levantines, whether Semite, Cretan, Smyrniot, or with the Egyptian long eye.

September was half gone and the promise to Monderoy had to be carried out. No sooner had Stéphane come back into the purple grape fields than the whole body of the twelve etchings weighed on his back like a leaden burden. It was superseded. What was all that set of clever etchings to the modern man, on whichever side of the barricades? Sell it to Fabre, exhibit it for its workmanship, and then do something real men care about.

He insisted on going into the fields to work again. "It is glorious," he spoke to Simone from the bush. "It's glorious because I don't have to do it, I can stop when I please, and it brings back agreeable memories and youth.

"You'll see," he tried to be carefree, "I'll change my subjects, everything. It will be as real as a day's simple work."

That night, Onésime asked him, "How did you like working

for me to-day, Stéphane? You remember us together? Well now I work still harder. Believe me, the worker is better off than I. He is through at the end of the day, for me the evening is my time of planning, of worries. Stéphane, society is based on collaboration, not conflict—I see it now. I . . .”

Stéphane interrupted coldly. “There is no need, Onésime, for you to say such things. You have changed your position in life. Whether your new view is a truth that comes from experience or is treason for comfort . . .”

“What did you say?” Onésime was white. “Brother or not. Did I hear right?”

Stéphane was quiet. “You can hear one thing. Your agreement with the unions is a trick to protect your position, while you attack Lévy-Ruhmann. You wouldn’t dare sign it for three years.”

“Why should I? Circumstances may change.”

“For a boy who scattered his random heart into the four corners of the Midi, I must say your economic roots are as deep as an oak tree.”

“Stéphane, stick to painting, that is your trade.”

“I remember a practical sermon I once gave you to the same effect. Well, I am sticking to my trade. You see the *gavaches*? Well, they’re scarecrow models. Because they don’t eat enough. Well, I belong to a new school of painting. We want fat models. We want them to be as gross, damn it, as the *Gouleuse* of Toulouse-Lautrec, the bathing girls of Renoir, the fleshy odalisques of Ingres. We want fat men where they wanted fat women. That’s my artistic need, my smug brother. For that, we need higher wages and to guarantee that, a union. And for that, I am working with Monderoy, stirring them up to ask for full demands, and I have spilled a family secret. They know you have three weeks to finish the pressing and that you must stop a strike that would injure you before the *cour de cassation* hears your case. So sign, you are lost.”

Cécile spoke before the astounded Onésime. “How could you, Stéphane! You know I haven’t been at one with Onésime, but still he is my husband. I never stab in the back. You, a brother, and one that he helped . . .”

Stéphane put up his large palm as a traffic signal. “When I have the money I will repay. I can never repay the kindness. But the welfare of fifteen thousand men working for you, Cécile, is still fifteen thousand times more important than my gratitude.”



"I'm not so sure of that," Simone said. "You are very superficial, Stéphane. A boat is sinking. A man must save his mother or Pasteur. His mother means nothing, Pasteur may save the life of millions. But if everyone were put on a barometer of social utility, the human weather would be fearfully stormy and cold. No, the certainty that men will save their mothers creates the moral strength that allows the development of Pasteurs."

"Bravo," cried Onésime and Cécile.

"Surely, Simone, you are not persuaded by that? Everything I know of you contradicts that argument."

Onésime cut the meeting short. "Stéphane, I won't quarrel with you. You are answering the sinner's bench call. You will soon be tired of this and more gracious. Au revoir."

When they left Stéphane asked, "Why did you utter such platitudes, you little fraud?"

"Oh, just to poison your existence. You were becoming so pious I smelt the hair oil."

He shook his head.

Despite the bitterness of Onésime, he realized that, owing to his crucial lawsuits, he would have to give Monderoy a one-year agreement to hold the line. When this compromise was arrived at, Stéphane received labour congratulations and family cold shoulders. The vine-workers were happier and the fields rose with the hum of locusts. It was a middling good harvest and a human thanksgiving.

In October it was cool. The intense application of Stéphane left him a shell.

"Shells must be deposited on the seashore," Simone determined.

She took him to a tiny pension at Cannes looking towards the Italy that was his theme. Soon he would be restored and enabled to present his etchings, not merely for Athanase Fabre, but for general exhibition.

He was shocked with the beauty of the Estérel range coming down to that wine-dark sea. He sought his brush but she smartly slapped his knuckles with her ruler and kept him from working. She painted while he reclined. Her exotic interests ran over as she impasted indigo tints on her waves and struggled to recapture the strange, strong buff of the cliffs. She used every ochre or terra-cotta approach she could. She eschewed the easy contrast of violet rocks, dark green vegetation, and the sea.

When she had completed her impressions, she ripped her canvases. The oft-painted scenes needed no other spectator. They had yielded up their secrets to too much talent for her to make a contribution. She was cross at having waved her cutlass in Renoir's armory.

They packed treasures on a truck delivering perfumes to Paris. It drove through flower markets and the *immortelle* market of Bandol direct into the fish and palm-oil markets of Marseille. They were barely installed in their studio when Athanase Fabre called. He said the pictures were better than he had imagined. He paid three thousand francs; of course they could exhibit them.

*A Nearly Full Atonement*

THE reason for this complaisance on the part of Athanase Fabre was that he was in a contrite mood. He and the ingenious Melchior Aboudaram had just been soundly trounced by Pressensé.

Neither of the two lieutenants could calculate the underlying reason for these drawings. Here they would soon be closed up by Lévy-Ruhlmann. The Marie de Montrésor episode was a direct forewarning. What did the aged conspirator want with etchings or wash drawings? He was in his second childhood, no match for the silky African or the brass-built ecclesiastic. They decided to act without him.

The Day of Atonement was at hand. Whatever other omissions their hated enemy might make, he would be present in the consistorial synagogue on the Day of Atonement. For his God was moulded in his image. Lévy-Ruhlmann knew that heaven was run on a strict accounting system. At the end of every year the books of good and evil must balance. Otherwise, Almighty God might become as confused as a multi-millionaire before an Investigating Committee. Everyone knows that unlimited power is the gateway of unlimited amnesia.

Lévy-Ruhlmann knew that God, in His grace, permitted ten days to elapse between New Year and the Day of Atonement, and that in those ten days you were given a last chance to crowd the credit side of the ledger with good deeds. He wondered how to be good. It was a rather unfamiliar sensation. But he would begin small.

He had really been vicious to Aboudaram. To get a boy into jail merely because he might prove inconvenient and then to clap him for sixty summer days in a police house; this was petty warfare, unworthy of him. He even desired to come to terms with the Renouviers, especially since Gisèle's money walked out of his family and Foulques and Jacques had linked them to financial power. That would wait. Aboudaram he could be kind to, to-day.

He summoned Aboudaram who entered his private office determined to kill the decrepit stork. When he sat down Lévy-Ruhlmann said: "No recriminations, Melchior, these are the ten days of beneficence. I dread to face God after what I have done to you. I am anxious to make amends. Meet me in the synagogue on the Day of the Atonement, I shall be up at the front, near the ark. I too shall say my *al chet*,\* we shall sing the Psalms of David. We have hired a cantor from Temesvár; he knows your rite too; he knows your ornaments.

"After we can hope that God has purged us of sin. After the new year commences well, I am ready to place you in my business at Alexandria, where your brother lives. At, say, five hundred Egyptian pounds per annum. It's near the Holy Land too, it's blessed."

Aboudaram thanked him for the invitation and walked out. He was torn between two ideas. It was fortunate he had not shot the scoundrel then and there. It would be better in the synagogue. Had he killed him in his office he would have died for it. But in the synagogue, there was the chance during the wail after the Kol Nidre. Everyone is dressed in his shroud, everyone is overcome by the most moving of all religious songs. The chorus covers the synagogue, the howls of the faithful are grandiose, heart rending, high pitched, general, and long. Everyone bends and beats his breast and declares himself the filthiest of mankind and too detestable even for God's wrath. Who would notice at this moment whether Lévy-Ruhlmann bent a little further, whether his shriek at being stabbed came from a riven conscience and not from a punctured lung? It was the perfect murder.

Not that Aboudaram was too sure that he would not like a good job in Alexandria. But it was clear that Lévy-Ruhlmann merely wanted him out of Marseille, and would ditch him once he got out there. His poverty-stricken brother would be of no use. Hence his dreams of dancing girls from Paris, Vienna and Bombay indifferently, such as delight the soft-skinned boys of Alexandria, were eliminated. This was another trick of a slimy millionaire.

That night he and Fabre dined in a small Tunisian restaurant, eating the ever-served stewed lamb in greasy rice and other delicacies dear to desert tastes. It was a haunt of convicts. But upstairs there were private rooms appointed in the manner of a seraglio. In one

\* A confession of sin.

of those rooms the two masterminds conceived the murder of Lévy-Ruhlmann, and later that night, of Marie de Montrésor.

When Melchior began his explanation of the Yom Kippur ceremonial, Fabre laughed. He repeated every word of it. He spoke Hebrew far more fluently than Melchior, which was saying a great deal, for Aboudaram covered its firm consonants and round vowels with a sweet intonation. But Fabre recited it liturgically. He had been prize man in the seminary at Rome in Hebrew and in Old Testament exegesis; his knowledge of the Hebrew ritual was used in his thesis on the origin of the Easter Week ceremonial. He could put on phylacteries, praying shawls, the shroud, the entire gear of a believing Hebrew and counterfeit their actions perfectly.

This was glorious news to Melchior. He himself was less sure of the rites of the North European Jews than was Athanase. They agreed to repair to the synagogue, take their places next to Lévy-Ruhlmann, Aboudaram openly and Fabre covertly. Fabre was to strike with his stiletto at the exact moment when the wailing was loudest. They were to get out discreetly, then taxi to the home of Marie de Montrésor, when, by way of compensation, she was either to be shot by Melchior or, which was more profitable, shanghaied to South America.

Their alibis were carefully arranged. They were to be in the cavern of the Rue Maxenot within an hour of the double murders. A time handle was attached to a gramophone. At the murder hour it was to lift the receiver and the record of Melchior and Athanase ask for a person to person call for Monsieur Duval in London. The report would take two hours. The number chosen was Claridge's Hotel in London, absolutely genuine. The handle would go down as soon as the wire was disconnected.

On the eve of the Day of Atonement, the synagogue was crowded. The persecutions in Germany, student agitations in Hungary, the Iron Guard in Rumania, actual pogroms in Poland, anti-Semitic riots in Algeria, had recalled all of the sons of the Book, towards their primitive beliefs. Critical attitudes, scepticism, assimilationism, these three hitherto dominant trends in French Jewry were suffering broad assaults. The historic maxim was ratified, everyone seeks to sink to the level of his persecutors.

Lévy-Ruhlmann was happy. Like most rich Jews he dreaded the socialist and atheist tendencies in his people. He tried to drain the class struggle in the mangle of tradition. In a way, he was

thankful to Hitler for his contribution to unity. He saw the rule of the race exemplified, that its leaders marry gentile money while the poor obtain their charity soup only on the condition of conformity.

The Kol Nidre was wafted high; it sent a shudder through the congregation. The florid cantor added Hungarian sauces to the immemorial prescription and dashed the purest of liturgical memories with a potpourri of Verdi memories. Steamer whistles shrieked in the fog outside; Athanase Fabre, perfectly clad, crept up behind the man he so dreaded. The ships kept up their sirens, the cantor his self-pleased song, the chorus squeaked their adolescent assent. The congregation thought of Berlin and howled.

Melchior cried too. Athanase hesitated. The man who was to kill was crying for his sins, crying for the crimes others had committed. In fact, Melchior was bawling. He was of no use in a co-ordinated murder. Athanase got his attention and he calmed down.

Then the conditions became perfect. Two thousand males were screeching, bending down, beating their breasts, the women were shrieking even higher in the gallery, the cantor, unperturbed, was outsing the stricken men, the chorus was inspired to outdo even him. You could have murdered a hundred men, no one could know.

Melchior was covered by sweat. Death, murder on the day when the eye of God, unpeeled, microscopic, all-vengeful, takes note of every sneeze of His chosen! And death by a gentile, a priest! If ever a man challenged eternity it was he, Melchior Aboudaram. As Athanase drew the stiletto Melchior held his arm, held it firm, pressed it down. He could not go through with it.

Athanase was cool enough to persist. Several men around them had time to look about and note the stiletto. That ended it. Lévy-Ruhlmann got up. Soon the floor of the congregation was a mass of agitated shrouds and praying shawls, going for the murderers. They made for Athanase first, they tore off his shroud and underneath it was the cassock of a Catholic priest! The pogroms had reached Marseille!

Lévy-Ruhlmann recognized the two confederates. He yelled for their arrest. He was buttressed, he was proof against another stroke. Athanase brandished his stiletto, a priest amuck. The cantor, conceited, continued his florid songs above the mêlée, the

unknowing chorus kept on harmonizing, and the two failures escaped to their waiting taxi, which, as per instructions, shot out to the house of Marie de Montrésor.

Fabre wanted to turn his stiletto on the coward, but he was so discouraged that he let his arm drop. They ordered the taxi back to the Rue Maxenot where they arrived in time to have a talk to the number in London; a M. Duval was actually there, the name they had given by conjecture! They were happy, sang him a long story about having heard he was interested in copra options in Marseille; he said, no, that was his brother in Paris, a speculator.

The alibi was perfect except that six hundred people could identify them.

But there was no police complaint. Lévy-Ruhlmann did not think it good policy to advertise the story. The congregation pretended it was all a mix-up, that someone with a sardonic humour had dressed as a priest and brandished a stiletto, probably some overwrought Jew who was anxious to turn the ceremony into a miracle play, pointing out their racial danger more vividly than by prayers.

That night the two would-be murderers trembled. They dared not attempt to leave Marseille. They did not know of the quick explanation that Lévy-Ruhlmann had sold the congregation. Twenty-four hours later he called, unafraid, in the caverns, and told the story to De Pressensé. "I will say nothing further about it, but I warn you, M. de Pressensé, that since you harbour these two men, I shall hold you accountable for their future acts."

Pressensé showed astonishment; it was obvious to the practised eye of his enemy that he really was not previously aware of the sorry business.

Pressensé is too timid to do me real harm, Lévy-Ruhlmann was certain, and the others are nullified. He began quiet plans to waylay and exile all three, but, no bloodshed. That was excluded.

Pressensé summoned the two heroes from their ratholes. He stormed at them. The majestic posture of Athanase Fabre had sunk to the cringe of a pushcart peddler before a corrupt policeman. Melchior Aboudaram looked like a schoolboy just taken in by the ear by a truant officer before father, principal, and teacher, all ready with switches.

"You blasted nitwits!" the leader cried. "I scheme and work here with a patience impossible for you to imagine. If you had killed him you would have left his family an estate of a milliard.

We should have been as poor as before. Vermin, bedbugs, hear me. I want his life *and* his money, both or nothing. I told you to obey me. You would not be able even to conceive of the depth, the intricacy of relations in my thinking for, I must tell it to you, you are children. Now be good and obey me, or out you go. I don't need you except for combinations that I, Xaver de Pressensé, determine. You understand."

The whipped young men muttered, "Yes, *sir*." They were glad to have escaped Devil's Island after what they had done. And that was the reason why Athanase Fabre was so complaisant, so agreeable personally to Stéphane when he delivered the drawings. He did not know why Pressensé wanted them. He knew it was to involve Stéphane and no more. However, he knew the reason must be excellent.



## *Simone Catapults Her Heart*

THE exhibition of twelve etchings, some *gouaches* and oil paintings of M. Stéphane Sabatier, the exhibition also of sixteen lithographs and eight paintings of Mlle Simone Lamouroux, was given on October 25, 1935, at the Trade-Union Hall at Marseille.

A bevy of high-school girls waited outside for the doors to open. The lavish praise extended by the Provençal press to any efforts of their compatriots was not wanting in this instance. "The Paris salon and their noisy independents stand to-day exposed in their meretricious subject matter and their artificial perceptions, by the natural talent of a Southerner. The tradition of Puget, Rigaud, Fragonard, Daumier, is triumphantly reaffirmed. M. Sabatier paints with the passion of a son of Languedoc. We in Provence hold out our welcoming hand to his amazing genius."

This combination of Southern boasting, astonishing list of painters of the most contradictory styles, general inflation, flamboyant phrases, every one of them unrelated to specific artistic achievement, the omission of a modern significant name like Cézanne, was in the tradition of Marseille journalism.

For Mlle Lamouroux, of course: "The Arlésienne beauty transfers the loveliness of her countenance to her canvases; we hope she will not mistake our gallantry for criticism when we affirm that it is difficult to decide whether any talent, however great, can surpass that divine beauty with which she was born." They had done their duty as good Frenchmen.

Apart from these consecrated liars, there was some serious criticism. The city of Marseille is not made up of people anxious to make good the traditions of *Marius*, of the *marseillaise* story (a type of Irish bull), or even of the legend of gestures and *vantard* talk.

The sober press, local art circles, the sincere modern literature movement, the working-class fly sheets, contained specific studies. Their conspectus held that Stéphane had a social vision that might become a way of thinking for lesser artists, that his technical endow-

ment was great, but that he saw the relations of money and institutions as static, and that he childishly directed his mind towards the vivid but obvious contrasts between the ideals of institutions and their much more sordid behaviour.

But his paintings, they agreed, filled the eye and enriched the heart. As for Mlle Lamouroux' paintings of Montpellier-le-Vieux, there was a general opinion that since Gustave Doré no one had hurled such apocalyptic thunder, but that her genius was not so manifest in her paintings of a *Paris Courtyard with My Friends and Critics*, that her lithographs of *The Horrors of Paris* breathed the same poetic, strange, mortal annunciation as had seized the half-demented Méryon. These they preferred to her apocalyptic paintings, for they reflected the moods of plain folk.

"Have you ever known a critic to tell you anything that gave you even the minutest idea of what to do next?" Stéphane asked, but Simone was not so good-natured.

"A critic is one who sees your heart beating and says it skips a bit too much here, now there, it's a good fellow, it's regular, watch for that leap! no, it's now been steady too long, it wants variety."

Two people passed through that gallery who cared not a centime for art. Lévy-Ruhlmann saw himself in sixteen pictures and realized that he was too much with Stéphane. He walked out nervous. Pressensé bowed to the painter but did not talk to the man who had scorned him. He looked at the Lévy-Ruhlmann theme and he saw nothing else. He rubbed his hands and departed an optimist.

Cécile came down from Béziers. She made a grand comedy of the whole business. "Simone, darling, your images of twisted rocks may look apocalyptic but those great depressions, those yearning peaks, strange geysers, oh, la la, really, my dear, you should either be more discreet or have a baby. Stéphane, you're still a pastor's son. Be like Onésime, a man of the new age. You're positively eighteenth century, my dear brother. It's all labour and capital now. Priests are passé. Or deal with sex. What men do in the daytime and the night-time. That will sell, surely."

"She's so happily married, so rejoiced, she thinks her doll's house the model of all architecture," Stéphane smiled to Simone, who clenched her fist and growled.

"I hate her. She creates only with her womb like any mammal. Lucky she isn't a contented hair louse, given over to a chuckling

parthenogenesis, an insect madonna. She's rich, fancy, smirky and nonsensical. I hope she drops dead."

She turned about rapidly, then said straight, "Give me a baby and I'll show you that I can create a grand one out of the mere lees of my ability. Imagine giving your whole substance to a child! It is immolation, a suttee of the soul.

"That woman is disgusting. Before she slept with a man you could call it soubrette charm, now it is a journal of her routine copulation."

"How do you know it's routine?"

"Listen, Stéphane, despite all the lies of girls, no woman who thinks of reproduction knows the joys of men. To produce babies you need no arabesques. A scientist will soon replace natural by artificial begetting. The poet is right. Love is engendered in the eyes. It is a woman's grasp of infinity. It does for her what their dull words do for philosophers, with this difference, that she sometimes gets there."

Just as Simone was recovering from her brush-up against Cécile, Onésime came into the exhibition. He did not see the pair. He spent four hours inspecting the pictures. "Poor brother," Stéphane whispered, "he is attending his own artistic funeral."

He came out of the gallery, meditative, slow walking. Stéphane came up to him but he did not greet him. He was weighing what he had to say, he felt responsible. At last he put his hand on Stéphane's shoulder and spoke. "Brother, I see to-day that I never had a vocation for art. I am doing well in business. It is not inspiring, but a good small job is better than botched aspirations. Brother, there is a mad streak in your preoccupation with one man as the money type. As to Simone, her genius, but not her ordering of it, is greater than your own. But she is so unstable. Yet I must admit that her explosions and her uncanny direct sight are faces of the same coin. One is the other, you must accept both. You will never be happy with her as I with Cécile. Married love is not a fool's dream. Stéphane, Beethoven wrote an opera about marital love and constancy. He was a brave man to be so simple. Only an Olympian can tell the truth."

Simone overheard the last words and added, "An Olympian bachelor, Onésime."

On the street Simone, still exasperated by Cécile's buttery-bar wit, whispered, "Stéphane, I'll trade you families. My dull liberal

papa for your chop-licking crowd. We'll write them a bill of divorce-ment."

Stéphane, unfortunately, was sentimental. "Simone, I know what they are and what they do but I like to see them; I nearly forgive them anything."

Simone was still smarting from his greater courage at Montpellier-le-Vieux and the series of papal etchings which she had not outdistanced. She again resented being in his orbit for months. She came up from the depths, after her small rumblings, like a volcano's fires. The speed, power and confusion of her eruption broke up the night.

"I was right on the Mont Ventoux, right a thousand times. Every time I've gone sentimental, I've been doomed. The devil with you, and this time for good. You're not an artist, a citizen. You're an Arab clansman, and, God, you certainly can stick to a rich family. I threw over your brother for a cowboy and I throw you over for something finer: myself. What echo lingers in my eardrums? None, copycat. My genius is disorder, the disorder of life. Life! you half-dead man. Let me go."

She stood declaiming in the centre of a crowded street. She stood there, arms akimbo, feet spread apart, her blouse opened. She turned to the gaping crowd, stamped her foot, and clenched her fists. Stéphane grasped her but at that moment a policeman in a wide cape came up. She slapped his whiskered face and tripped him. She yelled, "Scatter, you idiots, you've seen the show." The policeman looked at her as gone and thought Stéphane big enough for the job.

She would not look at him. "Stay away from my studio." She got there first, slammed the door, bolted it, refused to admit him, and sulked, made a quart of black coffee, drank all night, sketched, threw the sketches into the bin, flung herself on the bed.

"That insulting mother," she said, "thinks me an unfulfilled woman. That cow! And my dear Stéphane, he resents nothing." She made a pursed snout and talked baby tones.

"Her money patronizes me, and my ducky, he likes his damned family. I'll show them." She packed thoroughly. This was no Mont Ventoux fugue. It was in the same series, but Simone was truly fundamental in this revolt. She came downstairs with luggage, easel, paintbox, and saw Stéphane, haggard but determined, waiting to intercept her. He knew her.

"Don't try to stop me," she warned. "I can't live in a family vault. I hate you now in the open sunshine as I did last night."

He held her arm. Reason was useless, force might break the spell. She did nothing but whistled for a large yellow taxi, wrenched herself free, and sped off to the Gare Saint-Charles. At the station she closed her eyes, did an eeny, meeny, miny, mo, and pinpricked Perpignan. She had two thousand francs on her. This time it was a flight in comfort. On the train she wrote a letter to little Simone in Paris.

Dear Child, or rather Dear Simone,

It has been so long since we have seen each other. I have spent much of that time in pursuing lies, dashing at will-o'-the-wisps, that I have forgotten to write you, a real friend, my very own. A walking mirror thou art, that will outlast its original. How pleasant. Write me, Simone, I pray you, for you can speak with more wisdom than the old.

She scarcely looked out of the train. She glanced at Béziers, recovered consciousness at Narbonne, and was fresh as new-mown hay when the train rumbled into the dirty red station of Perpignan.

She drove to the Grand Hôtel, got herself a quiet but large room overlooking the glass-covered, palm-crowded patio, and slept ardently. Later she kicked about on her bed, mad and free. Downstairs, she ate famously, drank two litres of rough red wine in under two hours, flirted with dull Spanish gentlemen coming back tired from the pleasures of Montmartre, their silly phrases as jaundiced as their skins.

The town was Spanish or, at the least, Catalan. It was new to Simone. She rejoiced in the Réal, the old city, as mournful, thoughtful, graceful as a warm engraving. The *castillet*, the gate of Roussillon, had a squat pride not unmingled with naïve charm. The promenade of plane trees was an elevation: the tallest on earth. Pruned for two hundred years, their ogival arch shamed stone cathedrals. Yet the town was unmistakably ugly. It was just the mess she was looking for. It had everything disordered with large patches of the beautiful and the quaint.

At the end of the canal, which was the centre of the town, there was a café, built exactly like the main building of a plant conservatory in glass, with a steel-framed dome. It was smothered in many representatives of the palm family, date, palmetto, cabbage. It was kept hot and humid, but the Perpignan folk liked it all the same.

In pleasant weather, a really dreadful orchestra played on the balcony overlooking the canal. It was addicted to the worst American music subject to the worst French misinterpretation. The band was patriotic. It attempted the music of Roussillon's genius (a thousand times greater than that Debussy, they whispered), Déodat de Sévérac. If there was any brilliancy in his notes, they could not filter through that clogged medium. The habitués, though, applauded everything equally and steadily, in the celebrated French handclap: the palms hollow, three claps of five each, plus one of three. This is supposed to be reserved for an extraordinary performance but the six feeble musicians got it all the time.

The director of the orchestra was a rubicund ass, convinced that he was misunderstood, that his readings, his tempi, would be the admiration of Paris, "if ever a Southerner got a chance." He justified the Berlioz dictum that some conductors have muddy coffee in their veins. He was nervous, brown, plausible, and he had but one deficiency, he was destined by God never to play music.

He smiled at the beautiful girl. He smiled at all girls but the Roussillon ladies have too much of a Spanish moustache. He was from Rivesaltes on the lagoon. Their girls were a trifle prettier. Hence he considered himself entitled to judge women with the selective eye. He winked quietly at the lady, convinced that she would come at the end of the performance and eat out of his condescending hand.

Simone thought to herself: Devil take it, why not sleep with a fool? I have always wanted a man to be worthy of my appetite! Why not sample some of the meaner creation? I can learn a lot. Besides, I am so wanton to-night that all things look possible.

She smiled back at him and enjoyed his turkey-cock vanity at his conquest.

When the concert was over, it was one in the morning. The streets were more lively than is usual in France, Perpignan has a Spanish inflection in that too. He spoke to her with important nonchance.

"Mademoiselle, I am pleased you liked my playing. I am sorry I have this unworthy orchestra of but six men and in a provincial town. Mademoiselle is from Paris?"

"No, from Arles, Monsieur."

"Arles," he raised his eyebrows, "that is the city of beauty. Now I am convinced. But I understand your women are very

chaste, isn't that so," he nudged her with country buffoonery, his crude seduction technique was turned on.

She wasted no time, conversation was no pleasure for her with this retarded man. "I have never met a chaste woman in the city, at least I have used myself as a measuring rod." He was delighted, this was easy.

"Permit me to introduce myself . . ."

"Why?" she added. "You know and I know what we are dancing about for. Let's not exchange names but something more important."

"Willingly." He was a bit sulky at not being permitted to play his piece. He had only one.

He lived in a small lodginghouse in the Réal; she boldly took him up to her room in the Grand Hôtel. The night porter rubbed his round, aged eyelids; they were of parchment but knowing. On them he inscribed the record of iniquity. The dwarf insisted on accompanying them to her room, it was his duty. It was not, but it was the only good time he had. He wore a brown suit, had a really silky, long, white beard, had the shape, colour, habits of a cheap, brown, little sugar Santa Claus. He tiptoed up the grand staircase, told them to be silent, shushed them to sleep by inclining his delicate little head and reclining it on his hands, closed palm to palm, as in sleep. He got a franc for all this.

The sudden, stupid relation with this vain man was a nest of surprises to Simone. He was housewifely about clothing. Before he showed her any sign of desire or simulated affection, he systematically undressed with the serial certainty of a German field manoeuvre. He deposited his clothing exactly as he would find it on dressing again. He even smoothed it on the chair.

In all that time he did not utter a word. He was preoccupied with disposing his clothes neatly, especially the studs, for an orchestra director must be careful of his evening clothes. Simone, who sat on the crude bed kicking her legs, remained dressed. The sight of so much pomp in this everyday business was intensely amusing. Her glance was measuring the silly fellow as in a dry point. He did not undress entirely. He left on himself a vest of mixed silk and wool, the most unappetizing possible costume for love's battles. He turned solemnly to his conquest, and said, "Mademoiselle, are you ready?"

"Ready," she roared, "what the devil have I got to get ready? I'm always there, night and day, it is you that have to get ready."

She looked at him, her regard vivid, the gaslight dancing about her eyeball, as she laughed. "God, you look just like a penguin; I can't sleep with a penguin. Look at your pot-belly," and she pushed her index finger into his fat, "look at your disgusting make-up. I'd rather sleep with a dirty gipsy, you stuffed bird. Now get your clothes on as neatly as you put them off. Get out, you methodical blockhead. Get out."

He stood there unmoving; no girl was going to tell that great man off in that fashion.

"You can't get away with this, young lady, you invited me up here and you're going to go through with it. You can't take me up here and use me merely for a tease."

He tried to use force, the lout was sure that once you pin down any lady who has already gone so far, she abandons her coy business and swoons in gratitude at male favours.

She slapped his face hard, took off her belt and struck it across his eyes. Her skirt was loose. As she took off her belt it fell. Despite the pain, he was now convinced that she was going through this crazy performance merely to egg him on. He held her firmly. He had all the strength of a farm boy. He was convinced she would not scream or make too much of a noise in a scuffle on account of her reputation. He was right. The last thing she could stand would be vulgar police publicity. In a minute she saw that there was no way of shaking off the dogged stolid man except by getting into a worse mess. It was disgusting but she had brought it on herself. He was aflame with vanity. This was a real Don Juan episode. He had met a grand coquette, an Arlésienne, and he had conquered.

His conceit lent him forces. Though the man was detestable Simone found herself involved. In the end, her head was turning fast wheels of shame, self-ridicule, ridicule of the whole picture, a sodden self-justification. She thought: There's no more to it than this, except in the mind's eye.

By the time she opened her eyes, the impeccable conductor was perfectly dressed in evening clothes, ready to go! Simone jumped off the bed, looked at him hardly, opened the top drawer of the chiffonier, took out a copy of the day's newspaper, and handed it to him saying, "Monsieur has forgotten something, perhaps he would like to read his newspaper on the way home?"

He actually took it, obtuse. Then she could not resist the temptation; as he disappeared through the door, she kicked him in his stout



behind, slammed the door, and sat down, pettish, drumming her knees with her fingers in an endless tattoo.

Yet, nauseating as the episode was, it changed her viewpoint. Sex for her had always been surcharged with the romantic life. Here it was gone through under conditions that were dreary and prosaic. This was what women all over the world went through with dull men, vain puppies, stolid bumpkins; this was the kind of client that filled houses of prostitution.

During the night she was disturbed, her equilibrium gone, and her world impeached. She sobbed from shame. She could hardly walk out to the clerk's office in the hotel. Simone knew the old dwarf told nothing. It was her own embarrassment that counted and she could not remain. She had always laughed at girls who washed their shoulders after some masher had touched them, but she was in the same state of mind. So Simone left Perpignan to go up into a remote Pyrenean valley. There in the calm lands she thought widely on the business of being a woman.

One sees around her all conditions of men. Yet no woman, with what we call refinement, could accept nine out of ten of them. Yet some one woman does. Until men and women are free, love will be at their level of appetite, taste, aspiration. Yet why was there a Stéphane and that sordid musician under the same social constellation? What was wrong with the economic horoscope?

For some time after the episode of the hotel, she could not concentrate. She seemed cold. She shivered suddenly and somewhat hysterically. That brutal night had left a mark. The wound must be healed before she could think. Yet during her more composed moments she insisted on knowing why she had surrendered to that awful man, and what light that surrender, on the lowest level, shed on the so-called higher faculties of a woman.

Simone had planned to sleep with all manners of men; now she was glad to be alone. Every time she had any urge, the image of that nasty union came before her, made her shudder again, and cancelled her needs.

The stormy woman took a lodge in the wild valley leading to Andorra. She lived there alone, unafraid, saluted by smugglers dashing up the valleys with their overlaiden mules. The winter came and her chalet was nearly buried under snow. Provisions were hard to obtain. They were always rude and sometimes failed. But she had the concentration of St. Jerome in the desert, translating

the Bible. She worked at her dry points. She made a series of thirty during the fearful blizzards. Eagles hovered about and screamed, hungry. Lost lambs were preserved whole in the snow for weeks. Stale bread became her principal sustenance, a tun of rough bad wine supplied her drink, and pine knots her fuel. She slept on a rural folding-in bed, arranged to suffocate the mountaineer as his only way of avoiding the cold. She rose in the sleety dawn and worked by the large fireplace with a terrific relentlessness.

For she had the woman's vision. She swept through the cycle of women's loves and related it to their lives. She made one drawing each for housewife and market crier, seamstress and factory girl, farm girl and artist, thief and bookkeeper, fortune-teller and abortionist, doctor and prostitute. They were shown in their flirtations, amours, kisses, mending, cooking. On the other side of the picture were men in blouses like sailors or explorers, in overalls as miners and railwaymen, or in mufti as lawyers, salesmen, cardsharps, philosophers. These were illustrated as lovers and parents but as coloured by their daily work. She tried to carry over their training and occupations into the movement of their faces and their gestures. She attempted the catalogue of offerings we bring to the altar of reproduction. No vulgarity or coarseness or dun quality of love was omitted or blunted, but no romantic thrill or poetic flight was reduced. Free from the shafts of disillusion, free from the nauseating pulp-magazine glorification of love, it yet pictured such attitudes as part of that universe. The thirty prints would prove that an intelligent woman who had played every show of passion could tell men just who were those beings with whom they slept and why they acted as they did. It was her battle cry against the wary dictum of Nietzsche that man and woman are alien, ever so alien, that they can never know how terribly alien they are. Her art should show that they are as close as their daily bread.

The spring crept over the valley. It turned blue-white parquets of ice into messy lakes. Yawning boughs stretched and shook the comfortable snow from the evergreens. Icicles abandoned the eaves in noisy, dirty drips. Simone stood in front of her chalet, strong, satisfied at last. She had done a complete job and had expressed her every impression of one phase of life. She waved to the parties of smugglers and customs guards that appeared with the brown soil. A new year opened in which she could be happy.

*Why so Pale and Wan, Fond Lover?*

Across the harbour three lights gleamed as small and cold as those of glow-worms. The lights were on three rocks that tell the wearied battling sailors that the fearful storms of the Gulf of the Lion are nearly over and that a haven is beyond. On one of these rocks of less than an acre, a timber shack, rotten with age and exposure, housed one man. He wanted no company except that of the coast guard. The men on a weekly visiting boat brought him rain water and tinned food. He spent three months on that island. It was the trying period of the year when all the score of winds, for which the Provençal language has so many names, swept consecutively over his lonely head. The sailors did their best to warn him of his danger but nothing could make him leave.

He had several visitors. Reporters became eager for copy when they heard of the seclusion of the painter immediately after his successful exhibition. Artistic-temperament stories are the feature writer's offering to Sir Bourgeois in the easy chair. The press sent out special motor-boats with distorters to interview the "Lonely Eagle of Art," the "Cloaked Byron on the Rock," but his promised story was not printed, for he would not speak. After two attempts he was left alone.

He did not paint. He had left his equipment with his janitor. He was ten miles from the harbour entrance but Sahara would have been more nearly linked. He looked towards Corsica from which come sweet winds bearing flower odours over miraculous distance and whose hurricanes bear ambitious tyrants. Around his rock the sea was never blue, it was agitated in its slate by onyx green, or its indigo was crimsoned in the sunset, or, when it was calm, it was a pale blue fabric spangled with dull silver.

It was the time of the League sanctions for Ethiopia. Italian gunboats would snoop about, French submarines cock their periscopes, torpedo-boat destroyers bob up from Toulon roadstead and the officers would question the recluse. Stéphane was worn down by these repeated explorations and one day asked the flag officer of a

destroyer squadron to drop him at the Golden Isles off Hyères, where there was little company but much warmth and vegetation. In the officers' mess he was received politely but discreetly because the commander had whispered, "there's a woman at the root of all this nonsense."

Stéphane thought of her too much. For three months he had condemned himself for not holding her. He now accepted her indictment with a lover's trust. She was the most vivid and varied of girls.

"Simone," he instructed the winds, "don't find your way back to me unless my insight equals yours. Without that, let me die." That was not a figure of speech for despair. Life was now a principle with him, survival a mere habit.

On the islands off Hyères, the forward spring was sprinkling the roadsides and rills with violets. It was the tenth of February but the stones were warmed by the noon sun, and the desultory thinker could recline on them, finger violets, and transmute base thoughts into the gold of theory, or of ordered fancies. Much as Stéphane wished it, this Garden of Eden contained neither a tree of knowledge nor of life. After three months of isolation and several weeks of delicious repose, he was incapable of work nor had his reveries and detached insights, based on meditative idleness, made him a better man.

His mail was forwarded to him. He could not help opening the letters addressed to Simone, clearly by a child. The reading of these four letters affected him deeply:

Dear Mlle Simone,

My idol. Your letter postmarked Béziers evoked the South. I have not missed you. I am determined to miss nobody. I kissed your hands because they were beautiful. You are absent, there is no beauty to kiss, it only remains in the memory. Good; away from me, you are no longer real, you are foundered in my dreams with Helen, Iseult, my dream mothers. Come to me, come to me and I will bestow on you an adoration that will burn you. Come.

Your beloved

Simone

At first Stéphane was puzzled. He knew how Simone adored herself in her mirror, how she danced before it in Botticelli dresses.

Was she split in personality? Were these letters of her child self? He went on:

Dear Mlle Simone,

Your silence is cruel, devastating, eloquent. You say to me, our ages differ too much, abandon your strained images, they will make you drink poisoned juices from an over-ornamented crater. Oh, Mlle Simone, allow me to taste my poisons. I wish to be like the novelist who could taste the arsenic of his victim when he described it. I learned of him in Rouen.

I do not adore you any longer, I suspect you.

Your  
Simone

P.S. I dissolve in tears, idol, when I see what I have written. But I do not recall it, it is just. N.B. Every morning I get up, I ask myself, will you prove worthy to-day of being an admirer of Charles Boyer?

It was no split personality, it was a real girl. The next letter proved it:

Mlle Simone,

I was hasty, adored soul, in my letter to you, I am so overwrought with love for you that for this last year I have torn my pillow slips crying for a sight of you. To-day is my fourteenth birthday, great-grandmother gave me a party, there were fourteen candles, I snuffed them, ripped them out of the cake, and again inserted one, to the perfect beauty, the sweet intelligence. Forgive me, I faint at your feet.

Love,  
Simone

The fourth letter was the last she would ever receive:

Mlle Simone,

I have strange news for you. My mother returned after years of absence at Tonkin. She married an officer of the garrison, he has wax moustaches but is nice. Mother is supremely beautiful, she is nearly your sister but, I think,

more elegant. What a joy to find in my own *foyer* that which I sought elsewhere! Mummy and my new father (he is very gracious but he teases me and I will kill him some day for it and then regret it, he is so good) are going to a castle in Transylvania; land is very cheap there and he loves hunting. I shall be on the hill tops, I shall chase the antlered beasts, and from my generous heart, Mlle Simone, I forgive you, I no longer need you.

Respectfully,

Simone

P.S. I have read a romance called *The Insatiables*. Do not misunderstand me, Mlle Simone, it is not that kind of love. I am pure, I am for beauty and passion.

P.P.S. Don't misunderstand me either. I could not abide men, they have beards and the pictures show their bodies as full of hair. It is foul. I am nonplussed but I shall live in castles.

He read the letters again. In all the mass of contradictions, she was really of a piece. She worshipped beauty whether in Simone, her mother, or in the conjectured castles of Transylvania. He mastered the four letters. In them was his own Simone *in parvo*. She could be comprehended in the model of this girl.

And he, Stéphane Sabatier, imagined champion of the *gavaches*, mooned to the nocturnal croaks of futile regrets. He cracked his shaving mirror that he might never more look at his image. On the night walk he avoided pools where his shadow was cast by the steel-blue moonlight. His hands ached for want of work, he missed the calluses from the brush. His fingers were a fool's smoothness now.

It was the end of February. He came back to his dusty studio, intact because it had not been let. He bribed the concierge to allow him its use without telling the proprietor. He called at the dealers to find out how his work had been selling. He was celebrated, even in Paris, he was told, but admiration was gratuitous. For a few days his nonpaying adorers kept him in superbly imagined bread. He tried to borrow from the Left artists but as all the members, or nearly all, were poor, their scratch funds had gone long ago. He requested advances from the luxurious M. Picavet who rewarded great paintings with small steel-die mint mementoes. A week of

this and M. Stéphane Sabatier, the celebrated painter and Marseille challenge to Paris supremacy, was in a bed in the City Hospital, picked up for starvation. The superintendent telegraphed Onésime who came to the rescue by wired funds and cautionary dicta. They slowly filled Stéphane's capacious stomach with butter biscuits, the hospital superintendent using the rest of the money for beefsteaks, his modest commission.

*The Fatted Calf and the Fiery Cross*

LÉVY-RUHLMANN was bowed down with sin. Ever since his family had gone outside the Israelite fold, the goddess of fortune had been cockeyed. He omitted to mention that he had made at least fifty million francs by the Renouvier connexion. But the tree that once bore golden oranges now yielded only lemons. His trumped-up charges of fraud against Onésime received a much publicized rebuke from the highest court in France, which declared his slanders to be the most vicious in their experience of judicial reviews.

The charges of Onésime against him, however, had been sustained in every court and he must face their final review in March or April. If it went against him, he was eliminated from the wine business and mulcted in fabulous damages. Besides, Onésime, as self-nominated champion for Stéphane, was suing for damages because of arson on the *Lucie de Lamoille*. Lévy-Ruhlmann grew more thoughtful, convinced that unless the Messiah was soon announced by seven trumpets and came on a white horse, the old capitalist would be very much deflated. If, on the other hand, he came, would he be pleasant to one with two gentiles in his family? He had lost on the straddle.

François, dandyish, monocled, came out of the Croix de Feu headquarters feeling lavishly barbarous. His associates, retired colonels, grand *rentiers*, landlords, civil-service workers, twisted intellectuals, and a few decent dupes, had worked out the grand tactics for the "Zero Hour of the Great Day." This idiotic ceremony finished, the chairman, M. François Renouvier, creator of a new epoch, sauntered over to his father-in-law to touch him for the nth time for some props for this patriotic structure.

When he entered the salon, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann, his eyes red, sat in the centre of an unknown but large group of mediocre persons. Adèle was at his feet. Five persons rose and pointed their fingers, saying, "That's the man." They were a hotel clerk, a chambermaid, a *valet de chambre*, the owner of a brothel, and a lady of her establishment.

A notary and advocate, apparently aghast, wrote furiously.



The light lady spoke, "The pig, he'll say he never knew me. But he did. He promised to set me up in a grand apartment. Then he told me to go to hell. A fine gentleman. I'll even it with him. What does he hand me? Ten francs. A docker does as well, anyone does. You don't know me, dearie, do you, my little treasure, my dearie?" The accusing woman was white-voiced from vibrato; her legs were shaking.

François took it all in quickly. Since the Carcassonne election he was of no further use to his father-in-law. He was worth less than nothing to his own family. He had sold his birthright for a mess of mess. He was a lightning conductor of scandal. Cécile had done him in with incest, why not Adèle for adultery? The pompous man began to suspect at that moment that his humourless vanity and his stiffness made him a natural prey to such tactics. These ideas and deductions took him a second. He tried to speak when the other four accusers, as though instructed by an American cheerleader or Nazi *Gauleiter*, howled their heads off. He had apparently been guilty of such numerous adulteries, such elaborate, fantastic perversions, and such involvements, that it was really a matter for surprise that he had ever found time to take a wife at all.

Lévy-Ruhlmann, his voice breaking, said feebly, "My daughter is a good woman, and you defile her marriage and bring me to an early grave. Can a father survive humiliation? I have supported you these years . . ."

Adèle interrupted, "Waster and imbecile, answer my poor father. As for me, I am in the mire." Adèle moaned and looked at the wall. The lady of easy virtue instantly gave François a hospitable eye. It glinted with lascivious amity. To save himself, François could not recall her. He was not a paragon. He might have been with her. All he knew was that he brought nothing new to the family exchequer and cost a lot. He was out.

He stammered, "My father-in-law, I am beaten. I congratulate you. If ever you lose your fortune, go to Hollywood as director, you wholesale conspirator and liar."

At this the outraged group moved to attack him, but Lévy-Ruhlmann lifted up the managerial finger. "Let him go in peace. He has wronged me, but God will judge him. My daughter, my poor Adèle!" He achieved a wonder. His sigh was so artificial that it could be heard crooked.

The next week François received a cannon-ball divorce. And

so, after an absence of years, want of money drove him to Béziers. He was not remorseful like the prodigal son, he was simply corpulent and hungry. He was taken back into the family on condition that he vest the reversion of his estate in a trust, after which Onésime tossed the wretch some pocket money.

Then, out of policy he was pampered. The vain ex-traitor to his family was valuable because he knew a lot about the Lévy-Ruhlmann game. Once a traitor, twice a traitor.

M. Lévy-Ruhlmann had liquidated François but not to a profit. He thought over the salvage possibilities when he received an inspiring letter.

Rome, Palazzo di Colmaro

Feb. 28, 1936

My Dear Father,

Congratulations on the exit of the monocle. I sometimes think with regret of Gisèle but never of him. A situation is arising here which may interest you. The Ethiopian war has taken a good turn and the life lease of old Musso is extended by years. They tell me here that Blum is sure to win in the spring. I suppose you and all the other men with money are going to stand by and see the votes count you out of your money with your foolish democracy. Don't be a sentimental idiot. You know the elections in Spain are *dangerous*, yet you sit and wait for the slaughterhouse of communism.

Brass tacks. Musso is in for years and so is Hitler. You and your crowd are waiting for their financial finish. In the meantime Azaña and Blum will steal the shirt off your back. Why have you lost your cleverness? Because of your Jewish obsession.

Let me be frank, Papa. My money is in French francs and I cannot inherit a revolution. You would back Fascism to-morrow if Hitler was not chasing our crowd around. I guarantee he will keep on doing it and I will be a convert (don't you faint) before Musso profits by example, as he must. The greatest mistake of Hitler was the Jew business. By persecuting us he has divided the capitalists everywhere. They have only one salvation and the heavy money know it well. They are more afraid of Hitler's mistake in attacking the Jews than they are of revolution. If Hitler had not done

this stupid trick, every rich man, gentile and of the B'nai Brith, would have joined hands long ago to exterminate the trade unions, socialism, communism, and the other stinks.

The head of the Croix de Feu is as stupid as François (the dick, De la Roque). Why don't men like you take charge of it? You tell the Marseille outfit that François made the noise but *you were the angel*. Another thing. I know that parvenu Onésime. He faces a crisis with that unionization of the *gavaches*. Don't kid yourself, you may yet have a basis. Pardon this impersonal letter. As ever I am your beloved son, loyal forever.

Rashi-Mordecai

Lévy-Ruhlmann detested the style of this letter. "Slang," he shook his head, "slang. An indelicate age. But what he says is sound. Rather be a persecuted Jew than a communist pauper. Sense. Our faith will survive a thousand oppressors but our cash will never get over confiscation. Hitler, you are the communist's greatest asset with your medley of peasant hatreds. The Jewish section of milliardaires—why we have no policy when you come to analyse it! Depend on the votes of the poor, ha! What an investment! Blum must not win. It's a disgrace to the Jews."

Lévy-Ruhlmann called in the executive committee of the Croix de Feu, opened his cheque books and showed them who had sustained their patriotic excitement all these years. He offered to take them in tow and double the pot. Delighted patriots tumbled over each other to take the graft.

"Gentlemen," Lévy-Ruhlmann said, "France will not be lost. I speak as an Alsatian who for a generation saw what it means to lose France. She will revive, grander than ever, redeemed by the corporate state."

He rubbed his hands: kicked out François and took over his show. "I will make another thousand million francs," he was delighted, "I think as money should. I breathe once more. I am not confused."

François, always seeking for honours, in the meantime had tried to get back into the Croix de Feu at Béziers. His chagrin was complete when he was ordered to report to the chief for the region, at the home of M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. It was obey or give up. He gave up, humbled, reduced to a political, social, and financial nonentity. The poor fat fellow really cried like a girl.

In Béziers, Cécile tried to see where she was. She was losing sprightliness. Her estate crushed her. She was too little to hold such money bags.

"Onésime," she said, "the Renouviers are one again. If we win Stéphane's suit too, he will be rich in his own right. His mad ideas will be excused, for a rich man has as many kind judges as he has francs. But if he loses, if he will again be with Simone, he will have a stormy career. That man is a great painter but he is not so good when he is without Simone. She without him, yes. Not because she is the stronger talent. A cat walks alone, the lion is a family man."

Onésime said nothing. His brother was dear to him but he was displeased because Stéphane disapproved of his side of the social barricades.

Then Cécile struck a match. "Talking of critics of the state, have you seen Monderoy lately? I've always had a soft spot for that bald tribune. That night I cut the hypocrite's head with a glass at the bawds' reunion, I was simply arrogant with morality. Monderoy sang a song; I could join in the refrain."

"Cécile," Onésime warned her, "I want you to be happy. I know you. You cannot be radiant without family, money, position. At Montpellier in the little hotel, we were going into the never-never on love alone. Your next step was to a gilded bathroom and Guerlain's powder. The ease and, my dear, the charm," he bent and kissed her hand, "with which you have accepted your position, the energy you showed in correcting your father's mistakes, prove what life you are really fitted for. Cécile, don't flirt with socialism. It is patronizing to those that believe it sincerely and it is no use in our business. Yes, I've just spoken with Monderoy. He wants a forty-hour week. When decent wine is selling at one half of what milk sells for in New York, they tell me. I have refused to negotiate. They won't strike. They're waiting for their election this May, when they expect some kind of a Soviet. Poor mugs."

Onésime was troubled. The completeness of his devotion had rubbed off the bloom and stolen the fragrance of youthful love. He spoke mournfully, "Cécile, to take care of you I have to fight competitors, labour, scheme, be hard. Do you want to be poor? If so; so do I. If not, I must act as I do. When you laughed at my blue blouse when I was a little fellow, I thought it ugly; when you sneered at my hoop, I knew it wasn't round. I believe in you. I

might have been an anarchic chap or a bad artist or had more fun if not for that. But so I am. Monderoy works for thousands and I for one." He paused. She still said nothing. "There will be Monderoys and Onésimes, world without end. When his socialism comes about, his like will hurl mud at the plodding Onésimes, the men who carry out jobs as they come along. My foresight is for months, his for ages. Perhaps prisoners of their families like me are the cement of any lasting structure. Why is he better? Who can tell?"

Cécile bowed her head. "No woman can ask more than you have given me. Onésime," she toyed with his hair, "tell me what power we lazy girls have over hard-working devoted lovers?" She remembered to point a moral. "Papa taught us to laugh. We were chums, I thought. I looked for you high and low. Then I discovered Papa was no chum. He hated to sell me cheap. I haven't believed in laughing quite so much since. Onésime, I have tragedies as brittle as my shielded life. But even a figurine tucks up her billowy laced skirts because she fears ceramic mud splashes. Simone, I know, despises me. But there is much in leading an inferior life gallantly. Onésime, we are rich, why can't we be generous? Are you jealous of Monderoy? Reassure yourself."

"No; stern logic, I am no futile idealist. I see things as they are. If I were a field worker I would show no quarter. I yield only when I must. When they learn our lessons will they be generous? No, their justice will be implacable. My stand makes money for us now? Then it's proved right. The future is dark enough for us."

"Onésime, you were once so soft. Can you live by this battle song?"

"I am your warden. Do you want me to hand the castle keys to the *Jacquerie* leaders outside? Willingly. I fight for no class, only for you."

"We have accomplished nothing. We are not even of a class."

"We have two fine children, each other, and to-night the sound of birds in the spring. Hear that nightjar, poor fellow? He has one note, a dull caw. It is his music for a mate; they will set up a nest. On that one sound they get all we have, nest, babies. But, thank God, there are skylarks as well as that poor bird."

They stood at the window looking at the amorous cat between threatening suitors. The fox terriers yipped, the camelias looked nocturnal in the poor gaslight.

*I Sing of Many Things in Few*

STÉPHANE sold *The Popular Front's Delicatessen* to an epicure of the unusual in The Hague. Picavet paid him ten thousand francs on account and at once the old studio on the Cours Pierre-Puget was re-rented legally, even dusted, and supplied with immense quantities of oils and paints, crayons, sketch books, and large deliveries of wine, coffee and sardines for the interior decoration of a busy man who would not always be sure to go out to lunch.

The fiend possessed Stéphane. He woke at four, cursed the lonely sheets without the crumple and scent of a lady, danced about for an hour at breakfast, and then took out his chastity on ravished canvases. At twelve he walked out to see the population of Marseille leaving work for lunch and he joined them. From two until eight the crazy painter, immured in his attic, worked and in the evening received the company of fellow painters who forgot when he got up and made him their coffee-preparing horse until after midnight. It took little wit to suggest that within a fortnight he would go to the other extreme. That was so, except that he still painted a great deal, but hung around the Left artist's hall and the Trade-Union Hall instead of his studio. The money nourished him and soon he was as lusty as a bachelor can possibly be. He grew in confidence as the square of the days. In other words, he felt fine.

He was surrounded by commentators. The studio buzz went something on this order:

SCENE: *A studio, Marseille. Time: Eight. Flourish, a coffee pot.*  
*Enter Two Futilities bearing theoretical tabards:*

FIRST FUTILITY: A lilac is not beautiful. Nor is a gladiolus. Nor any flower. Nor the grass allegedly green. Nature is anti-artistic; art is imposed, not given. It comes from the ordering of the painter. His brain is formal. Nature is created in studios as an illustration for a city-born fantasy. It is usually a poor illustration because of its chaotic origin. Geology

grills rocks in suns and hot pressures and shapes muds. The earth's crust sickens as the globe spins about and so gets spinsick and vomits lava from volcanoes. To say that nature is beautiful is to say, like an idiot, that since anything happens to exist, it is beautiful, for all that nature *does* is to *be*. But art is a selection, a criticism. That ends the puerile and grocer-boy romantic ideas of blue sky, etc., as delicious.

SECOND FUTILITY: I agree not because your ideas are correct but because, for my jaded dissents, agreement is quite a novelty. Nature is not merely not beautiful, it is actually hideous. A man sees a field carpeted with poppies. It is a pretty poor imitation by that artist, God, of a splendid plate of the sores of scarlet fever in a pathology atlas. A pastoral convention of the sixteenth century cannot challenge a bacteriological one of the twentieth. When is a man most beautiful? When he is covered with disease. Like the heart, it is love worn on the left side. Do you know what natural beauty is? A convention of the beaten. They see no beauty in their functions for they are ugliness itself because they are the defeated. Only victory has wings. So they find refuge outside of the human deed. There they have failed. What swindlers. A man stinks with incompetence; he cries out, "This is an adorable primrose." Swindler, I know you. You have no assets.

Enter a sad-looking, lank-haired professor munching two free sandwiches ——— full-cheeked, he howls:

SILENCE FUTILITIES. Do you attack history with your impudent guesses? Nature was invented by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Or if not by him, by some Englishman like Thomson of the *Castle of Indolence*. Look in the eighteenth century: everyone dreaded the country with justice. It is full of snakes, spiders and poisonous plants. When Edward Gibbon passed over the Alps, he nearly fainted from their hideousness and rejoiced to be in the opera house at Turin, facet of beauty. To Voltaire, the Mont Blanc was a badly thrown up ice-cream cone, had they then existed. The Scottish highlands were dreaded as the nursery of thieves, lice and the itch. Nature was invented in the Rue de Grenelle, on a Beauvais carpet, under an exquisite statuette of Pigalle. It is merely another expression of a city

man's need for a vacation. But he is intelligent enough to use it for two weeks and work in the city for fifty. He sighs for nature but mocks it.

(Duly corrected, the Futilities snicker, "Fogy," and drink.)

Enter a LOVER OF THE PEOPLE in rags, bearing dog-eared books and looking violently humanitarian.

All art is a lie that does not speak of the people. No theories, no criticism. Nature is nothing; neither is the mind. The people is beautiful. Take up the song of the humble like Alphonse Daudet or Harold Bell Wright. The postman on his weary round, the housemaid on her rubbed knees soaping the floors. The people starves and suffers. Once France was a land of simple *verismo*. Not naturalism imposed by a rich Flaubert and later doubted by him. Not the gazette of the people by a Zola. The simple message of Millet, of Lhermitte. They saw the peasant in his superstition, the fisherman in his supernatural dreads. And they fell down before him because it was THE PEOPLE. There is no life outside of them; they are the sum total of experience. Paint them and every colour shall spew life.

(He swoons from honesty. He is escorted to a love seat.)

A noise is heard on the staircase. Enter man looking like Groucho Marx and whistling through his tigerskin.

Savagery. Contempt of civilization. Rejection of the games men want to play. Your own, egoistic, brutal, to provoke revulsion from the civilized. No apartments, no toilets. The toilet has ruined the soul. You held your noses? Ha, I have succeeded. I knocked you off your comfortable stools. Art is vulgarity, insistence. Ruined by patrons, smelling of city asphalt and dull country hay, it has lost its claws. To the wild YES. To the wild NO. I contradict myself like Walt Whitman. I am below the human. Whoop!

He is fed animal crackers and rests tamed. His tamer says gently:

My name is William Blake, tiger, tiger. Rest. The apocalyptic wedding is art. Make up a clean cosmogony of the heavens



and dot them with pale Bloomsbury faces. All will be well, if the wail of the lost child does not consume your studios.

A whirr is heard, a motor-cycle has mounted to the studio. Enter a critic in goggles, carrying a speedometer in his chest, a metronome on his feet, a field glass on his nose, and a cube on his head, crown of his mechanical phylacteries.

My attire speaks. Stéphane Sabatier you are a pastoral. 51.6% of Frenchmen live in cities. Art is concerned to-day only with machinery, mother of capitalism. Stop your superseded muse and hear the chime of the alarm clock. The subway is more beautiful than a molehill. Be up to date. Wear snappy clothes. Clothe your thoughts with zippers. You a socialist? My friend, you are a farmer. This is the twentieth century.

A BASS VOICE interrupts. It has no body emitting it:

These are all symptoms of the decline of the Roman Empire. The rich people of to-day build palaces in the country, full of marble. They have immense chariots made in Coventry, Detroit, and Puteaux. They have degenerate poets like the Romans of the third century A.D. who mocked Livy and Virgil. They are sunk in Byzantinism, twenty footnotes to one creative poem. Beware of the last man's insolence. It is the arrogance of the twilight, of the Diocletian cash register.

A Soprano Voice squeaks. It comes out of a mousehole:

I'm sick of the decline of the Roman Empire. I'm sick of degeneration. Whenever rich men build country homes, from the Touraine to Blenheim House in the 1710's, idiots repeat the same thing. Every time people get smart they are called degenerate. A D'Urfey corrects the inflation of Milton and the age is called degenerate. An adolescent like Shakespeare is trimmed by Colley Cibber and the last days are at hand. The Roman Empire and degeneration pique my thin soul. They make you see the same symptoms always at the wrong time. Therefore, friends, disregard the sententious boom of my predecessor.

*Enter:* CROWD OF MASQUES. One dressed in cubes, the other in points, the third in lines, the fourth in curves. Every theory from

1900 to 1936 enters and counterdances the other. Song of ONE  
MASQUE:

In the cities men are cunning and their thoughts are quite complex,  
In the studios artists fumble, for their only guile is sex.  
Let them then be up and coming and forget their idiot themes.  
If they'd be as smart as salesmen, they would count their cash in  
reams.

This ragged-metre poem was at once purchased by a calendar maker. Stéphane rose up and took up a new broom. It swept clean. The cobwebs disappeared, the mousehole was stopped, and he looked about. The studio was empty and he could paint.

Stéphane painted a new series of oils, or rather projected them. His notebooks were full. Ashamed of the religious pictures which offended many honest workers and had no bearing on present French struggles, he dealt with the life he understood so well, and on behalf of a cause he was to make his own, the wine growers. Thirty years' experience in the fields, as child, helper, worker, foreman, business man were incorporated in the sketches. Monderoy examined them but was not impressed, for what he wanted was fighting cartoons. But although he saw that Monderoy was not a complete man, but rather a sort of incarnation of justice abstract, he sharpened the themes a great deal. The role of the business man was delightfully illustrated by a sketch showing him, glad with enterprise, consigning his wares from Bordeaux to the newly developed Antilles in 1750. The second sketch showed him threatened by a banker and a shipping agent who have reduced him to a carrier of risks. His face is an epitome of defeat. This was 1936. Stéphane felt that by some such approach he could combine the good in populism, a true liking for the people, with intelligence, a study of why the people and their masters had such different value to the community and towards each other at different times.

The Popular Front Committee was impressed by the second group of sketches and commissioned a series of large posters (black and whites, for they had little money) with which to placard the whole of the wine districts. He was commissioned also to make some posters for the projected union of all labour in France to be placarded in Marseille itself. Gratified by his selection, he was soon immersed in work that bound him to the future. The phase of the papal pictures was long past.

He sat lonely in his few spare moments and dreamed the simplest of ambitions. A child of six could not have been more naïve. He would be a great artist, a mural painter, say. Let the clever men attack it as vulgar gigantism, as an evasion of the specific issues that must be faced by an artist. He didn't care. Since the Sistine Chapel, mural painting had become devoid of ideas. In Mexico a social school had arisen. Fashionable New York was spreading the news to Europe. He felt sure that what the Orozcos sapped out of Maya and Aztec, mestizo and Colonial Spaniard, potteries and weavings, out of the quick aspirations of peons deprived of the minimum above existence, he, Stéphane Sabatier could do better with the rich experience of Europe. Mural painting, too, required him to co-operate with other workers; it was good.

The next day his dreams were rudely torn by a notice in the newspaper that M. Onésime Sabatier had become chairman of the Patronal (Employers') Association of Hérault. He wrote a vigorous protest to Onésime, covering him with accusations, and got back a post card:

Stéphane,

You to your business, I to mine. I was invited to join the Croix de Feu. I recoiled and threw them out, even though L.-R. offered the olive branch and I think meant it for helping him to gang up on the Popular Front. I am sending this openly. I am staying out of politics; just in an economic front.

Don't get too excited.

Onésime

So he and Lévy-Ruhmann were in the Employers' Federation together, against the unions, while fighting each other to a finish in their arena, the courts. And he made a virtue now of not being a Fascist! Easy is the . . .

Stéphane went over to the bunting-covered headquarters of the Popular Front. "Comrades," he said soberly, "give me a place on our side in which I can do work just as important as my perjured brother on the enemy staff. I disown him. I will never forgive."

They embraced him, the painter to whom working Marseille was grateful, the designer of their banners and placards. He sat high in their councils, this man without political ambition. It was their gift to the spirit.

## *A Beautiful Murder*

THE cathedral of Saint-Sernin at Toulouse has a wedding-cake tower much like Saint Bride's of the newspaper men in Fleet Street. The city is married to chic and gabbling, to the condescending laugh of permanently catty and gracelessly overdressed ladies, to the coxcomb critiques of their vain, eloquent consorts: it is a most unpleasant place. Unfortunately it is the centre of the Southwest of France and everything gravitates to its crowded noisy streets. The *Dépêche de Toulouse*, its newspaper, rivals any in Paris for telegraphic service and international correspondence. It is as weighty and as fierce an enemy of images and racy writing as is *The New York Times*. From it a future archæologist will conclude that merriment was so rare in France that it did not pay to record its existence on that cuneiform block.

The mighty Garonne River sweeps about Toulouse, sometimes through it. The cooking is vile, the *cassoulet*, its only feature, inferior to Castelnau; its wines are mediocre. City of blood and persecution, it has every vice that has disfigured Nîmes, without its literature or its Roman grace. But it is rich, terribly rich. Its floral games are the dream of Southern writers. It always crowns the formal, the conservative, the mean and penurious, but carefully turned epigrams of tired sadists.

It is a natural gathering place for bishops. The hierarchy of Southern France was assembled here for the Lenten season of 1936. First, the position of the church in Spain moved their hearts. The Spanish people had made a grave physical mistake; they thought church buildings were forests or coal mines or oil wells, in any case, fuel. It was necessary to correct errors in physics.

A second source of danger was that of the faithful in France. Large groups of young Catholics, especially the *Jocistes*, saw nothing in the teachings of Jesus Christ against the forty-hour week or holidays with pay. Most of the believers thought well of Christ's promise to make men free; it did not consort with the teachings of

the Fascists that man's soul belonged to the authoritarian state. Here the bishops were wise shepherds. They endorsed large sections of the movement; they even failed between them to produce an attack on the Popular Front, apart from a ghostly warning against the communists.

Into this assembly of the high clergy came M. Xaver de Pressensé and his aide, Father Athanase Fabre. They were anxious to see the Bishop of Carpentras; he was equally anxious to see them, as he needed the money he had lent his brother.

"How do you do, Brother, what a delight! Father Fabre," he faced him as one iceberg does another, smooth, threatening a submarine crash. "I hope you have obeyed my instructions to work with my brother in everything." Father Fabre was about to answer when the bishop stuttered, "Well, what are you waiting for, man? Don't you know your place? I wish to talk with my brother. We shall summon you when you are needed. Go."

Athanase Fabre did not even bite his lips, he had learned address. He had learned to wrap hatred in the silver foil of a million francs. He stepped outside the De Pressensé room into the general robing parlour of the bishops. They were being dressed in front of mirrors like ballet girls or prima donnas.

He saw them with the accumulated frenzy of ambition. He could have kicked the mitres off their heads, taken the large crosiers from their skinny, aged hands, pulled the ribbons off their head-dress. He watched them, nearly all men over sixty, many over seventy, prinking their coifs, adjusting their vestments, smoothing their skirts.

Servile priests and robing boys fluttered about them, bringing them the appropriate articles of their toilette. They nearly all spoke French with a subtle Northern accent.

The peasant priest of Valence hated their airs and manners. Nearly all came from families of the robe, the landed gentry, the cadet nobility. He fumed as he thought of the loaded dice from birth, of their advantages in a church where his spleen made him remember that all men were equal before the throne of God. He scribbled furious notes, endorsing the nearly forgotten Americanism of Archbishop Ireland of Minnesota, who built the ecclesiastical structure on democratic foundations. He hoped in this way, together with the prestige of money, to rise in the French Church, eldest, but truculent daughter of Rome.

He was writing out footnotes summoned from his photographic memory, when a Spanish bishop looked at him, ordered him to stand, and sermonized him with terrific scorn on his impudence in sitting in the episcopal robing-room. The madman, whose grandee sentiments were inborn, slapped and cuffed the priest. The French bishops turned in horror for they had never seen such a barbarian. Their elegance and refinement had blinded them to the true manners of some of their Spanish colleagues. It lowered their enthusiasm for their sister Church.

Fabre did not dare strike but he went out determined to assassinate this petty tyrant. He always carried the lucky stiletto that had extracted so much money from Cyprien; he put the Spanish bishop on his list. A kindly visiting German bishop actually came out to assuage the feelings of the priest. He discovered with joy that the young father was versed in the *Patrologia*. That was his own hobby, so that in a few moments Fabre's ruffled feelings were composed. He had a good chat and made an ally of the scholastic bishop from Franconia.

Inside the room, Pressensé and his brother were going over business. In the first place, a cheque was handed over, for twice the amount the bishop had lent. Then the merchant brother showed the bishop a complete dossier on Fabre. It contained a copy of every letter he had written, of every document or receipt that could show him guilty of the basest crimes. "That will keep him in order, Brother, his ambitions will never bother you. I believe you will be named archbishop at Rome this very year. If he attempts any denunciation or politics, this dossier will not merely exclude him from the Church, he will complete his excommunication in the penitentiary."

The bishop read the dossier with relief, but when he came to the abuse of Fabre's position as confessor, in order to seduce novices, horror seized him.

"Brother, this man is a monster; no priest, however depraved, has ever been guilty of any such sacrilege. I cannot be silent on this. Smuggler, narcotic salesman, forger, perhaps assassin, these are not my business but that of the state. I am not an informer. But this is of the Church, he has defiled that which is holiest."

"Keep quiet, the offence is over, it has been done, I have stopped him. Bide your time, we can send him to prison better when you complain as an archbishop than as a bishop. Even so, would you

wish the Church to make this public? Are forty thousand priests in France to be exposed to the jeers of agnostics because a wolf has entered their flock? No, let's punish him for this, but accuse him on other grounds. Bide your time, we are near your ambitions."

"How so?"

"I am bringing suit to-morrow against Lévy-Ruhlmann for two hundred million francs. I have this worked up for years. From small payments to his clerks down to outright, er, *transfer* of records, I have reconstructed the offences he committed against me for many years. I shall easily win this suit. Then I will again be one of the half-dozen rich men of Marseille. You will be named."

De Pressensé had heightened the picture for his brother. Actually his documents had merely nuisance value: on cross-examination the unshakable octopus, Lévy-Ruhlmann, could place them in their setting. A clean-cut decision was improbable. But if Lévy-Ruhlmann were not there to testify, or to instruct counsel minutely, these documents would be decisive. The needs of the occasion were obvious.

Pressensé told his brother nothing of this lest, after the murder of Lévy-Ruhlmann, the bishop put two and two together. He knew his brother to be sharp, but in all the fraternal unity and gossip of years, the innocent cleric had no idea of the depravity hidden by that urbane exterior.

"We must summon Fabre and tell him that I will require him for a very special task, for which you give him your episcopal word that this dossier will be destroyed. He must obey in any case. You agree, Brother. It is pressure, it is unethical, but it must be done."

"Do you require it, Brother? Then it shall be done. I have no respect for this hideous priest. It will be difficult for me to hold back my fists. Call him in."

Athanase Fabre, smarting under the battery of the Spanish bishop and the previous hauteur of his bishop, entered the room, his eyes the gauge of his boiling resentment.

"What do you require, my lord?" he snapped.

"Sit down, Athanase," De Pressensé instructed.

They showed him the dossier. It was fatal. They had allowed him to make money, but his advancement in the Church was at their mercy. He had been tricked, he, the smartest man in the world. He had been trailed, ticketed, classified, photographed, recorded, from the fatal night he entered the cavern.

"Fabre," the bishop said, "you see the charges concerning the novices. It makes you loathsome. Yet I can pass it over since it is not officially proved, merely probable. My brother tells me he will require some extraordinary services of you, the nature of which he will disclose to you only. I wish to stay out of things of this world. I give you my word, as your bishop, that if you do him this service, I will not be convinced by this inconclusive dossier. You may kiss my ring and also the hem of my skirt. That is my pledge to you, provided you make proper confession. There shall be no barrier to your advancement."

Fabre knew the reputation of the bishop, it sufficed. He kissed the ring, the hem of the skirt, made the sign, ushered himself out apparently in full obedience, the act of submission complete.

That very afternoon the high court of France decided that the claim against Lévy-Ruhlmann on the burning and insurance of the *Lucie de Lamoille* was unfounded and slanderous, and he, Lévy-Ruhlmann was advised to proceed criminally against the vicious Stéphane Sabatier for his poisoned tongue. Stéphane read it amused. He never expected anything else. The Marseille newspapers published obsequious headlines glorifying the maligned merchant, now happily vindicated, and attacked the "Socialist Defamer."

The news reached Lévy-Ruhlmann on the night of the Purim, the feast of Esther. He, like his race, had been snatched from the claws of the ever-present Hamam. He rejoiced. That night he gave a reception for his children and grandchildren. He ate twenty Haman's heads, the Jewish cake, varnished and stuffed with poppy seed. He went to the synagogue to hear the Megillah, the recital of Esther's story blended with the local history of the congregation; he came back, put on false faces, danced in his strange fowl fashion with the children, played games with them, whipped the clappers and noise-makers, sang merry Hebrew and Alsatian dialect roundelays, as nonsensical as Lewis Carroll poems, behaved with high foolishness, for he was the grandpa, and Purim is the Mardigras of the Jews.

He had never acted so in the memory of his children. This decision to him was an omen that his dangers were over. Even the Renouviers might not win their suit and he would lord it over the wine fields of Hérault. He rubbed his palms till six in the morning. They itched after as they never had before.

The next day the assassins met in the cavern. For De Pressensé, the murder of Lévy-Ruhlmann was worth two hundred million



francs. For Fabre, it removed a man who was powerful enough to destroy him and whose moral reputation was now at a new peak. For Aboudaram, it was a religion, nothing more nor less. But De Pressensé had waited until he could plant it on Stéphane Sabatier, the man who had brought about his ruin. At last, the plans were perfected. They were to be carried out a week from that day.

Next Thursday night, a chorus from Strasbourg was to sing the Magnificat of Bach, and, a still greater attraction, the Passion according to St. John. Everyone who was celebrated in Marseille would be present. It would be given in the Opéra, that great modernist glass-fronted singing-bird house. Lévy-Ruhlmann would be there as a homesick Alsatian, Stéphane as a Huguenot and a fanatic for choral music. The idea of death at a concert came naturally after the episode of the synagogue where only Aboudaram's coward hand had stopped a grand murder. Besides, it had become a staple of detective stories. Stéphane's seat was an eighteen-franc balcony *strapontin*, Pressensé had a twelve-franc wooden seat behind him. Lévy-Ruhlmann had a sixty-franc *loge* seat. The two confederates purchased standing room only.

They also arranged to arrive at the concert hall at ten-thirty. The concert was to terminate not later than ten-forty-five. At ten-twenty they put on the gramophone for a person-to-person call to London, to function at eleven o'clock, or a few minutes before. It had worked perfectly before and they could risk no new alibi devices.

The concert was given before a thousand men in formal dress, a thousand women in Paris evening gowns, fur-lined wraps, asserted by jewels; that is, all present were in the livery of salvation to hear the sacrifice of the Lord. The chorus divided the raiment of Jesus by lots, the Roman soldiers ripped his purple robe as the bankers and shippers adjusted jade cuff links, the tenor evangelist flowed over the harpsichord accompaniment while overfed bourgeois repleted. Thrice did Peter renounce his Lord, thrice did a thin-blooded dame utter timid coughs. The mob yelled, "Barabbas," in thunder tones; suburbanites consulted their timetable watches. The music lovers were there too and they looked hatefully at the disturbers just when the baritone Jesus was singing the virtue of patience and understanding.

At the end of the spiritual concert, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann left his *loge* and walked into the outer hall, where the élite of the city

were swapping various hypercritical dicta about interpretation and delivery. His spare form cut through this culture; he was soon at the main entrance.

De Pressensé had followed Stéphane down the stairs from the balcony. He took him by the hand and said, "Surely on the night of the Passion music, you do not nurse grudges." Stéphane disliked the familiarity but he had no defence against action *ad hominem*.

He said, "I have never trusted you, that I say candidly. Still I do not wish to act like a child. All right then, I'll shake hands."

De Pressensé held him by the arm and piloted him down quickly. They arrived at the door as Lévy-Ruhlmann was being ushered out by the porter.

The millionaire could not resist the temptation to insult Stéphane: this was just as De Pressensé foresaw. "My friend, you must paint some more faces of me as the everlasting crooked millionaire. I will give you plenty of opportunity in the criminal courts. Incompetent in business, you thought to ruin my reputation rather than admit you were a fool. Well, from what I can see, you paint as badly as you do business."

He slammed the door. De Pressensé opened it quickly, so that he and Stéphane would be seen going right out into the dark after the insulter. They then turned left and De Pressensé walked Stéphane for a half-hour through the very darkest streets, where nobody would see them or recall them. He was profuse with boring explanations, then left Stéphane near the Cours Pierre-Puget. He took a taxi and, chuckling, went back to the caverns.

The chauffeur in Lévy-Ruhlmann's car had been hit over the head with a blackjack, dragged into the interior of the car and undressed. His uniform fitted Aboudaram fairly well. Aboudaram, his face covered up to his eyes in a muffler, drove the Hispano up to the opera entrance. He purposely drove it a few yards ahead so that the busy doorman would not open nor yet remember anything.

Lévy-Ruhlmann got in, he sat down tired. He always went alone to these concerts for his wife detested music. He noticed something strange, and put out his foot. Fabre had held the chauffeur in his arms, now he let him fall on the floor. The rich man felt the back of the chauffeur, bound and gagged and blindfolded. He was ready to shriek, especially as he saw that the car was headed towards the Roucas Blanc, the opposite direction from his home.

He now knew his hour was at hand. He looked about and

saw Fabre who was holding a stiletto to his mouth. The car never stopped. It was being driven at eighty miles an hour, whirling about the Corniche road towards the Ciotat.

The chauffeur looked back. His eyes were those of absolute evil. They fixed him with the terror that a cobra hopes to inspire in a mongoose. Lévy-Ruhlmann shuddered, it was the enemy, the unescapable enemy. He could not cry, nor resist. He believed in fate, his time had come.

The chauffeur's voice called to him "Say your *Shimang*, God will soon be with you." It was a fellow Israelite; he did him the favour to let him die in the faith. For a moment Lévy-Ruhlmann, flashing memories of the rarity of murder in the Jewish community, tried to hope. But when Aboudaram's hate-filled eyes turned towards him, he accepted the sentence.

Lévy-Ruhlmann turned his face to the side of the car and repeated alone, his eyes turned from all consolation and friendship, the praise of his Creator. When he had accomplished the rite, the chauffeur signalled to Athanase Fabre, who clutched the scrawny neck, pressed the terribly distended Adam's apple, and stuck the stiletto in the nape, deep. He drew it out after a minute. He pressed the neck hard, for he wore gloves, sewed on to which were celluloid plates to which had been transferred from stolen objects, Stéphane's fingerprints, carefully reproduced by carbon black. Lévy-Ruhlmann's glassy eyes looked little different dead than alive.

They drove the car down to the Cours Pierre-Puget and went on into a street abandoned to warehouses. There they hit the chauffeur who was beginning to stir once more. Aboudaram took off his uniform and resumed his dress, using only the gloves with the celluloid attachments and, looking about for a policeman or witness and seeing none, the two criminals got about the corner, down crowded streets, and were at the cavern at the same time as De Pressensé. It was only eleven-thirty, their call to London would make it impossible for them to be identified as the assassins.

De Pressensé asked them, "Well, well, all done? Accomplished? Wait till we make that money. You'll be multi-millionaires. Watch Sabatier's face when he tries to make me a witness for his alibi! I left him at the door, who knows? I'll send him to the guillotine, money, revenge, justice, all complete." He was radiant. His hunchback face grew oily with glee; he revealed a terrible childishness.

"I don't know about that," said Fabre. "I just don't like a witness that might forget, particularly when I stand in his episcopal brother's way. Don't worry about that dossier, M. de Pressensé, I'll steal that to-night. You won't be there to worry about anything." He put on his gloves with the celluloid prints, he grabbed the frightened man, and as he pressed his throat he repeated every humiliation, every insult he had received and digested.

"I know where you keep your treasure and I prefer cash to your lying word." De Pressensé tried to breathe, he could not even make a noise under that bony, unrelenting pressure. He looked like a helpless deer in a tiger's clutches, his pupils under his lids, the whites enormous. He dropped dead.

Fabre kept his word to Aboudaram. He pressed six appropriate bricks. They opened one brick from which he extracted a safe-deposit key. Then he pressed four bricks in succession, that opened the box itself. The box did not open, for there was another group of three bricks that slid it and revealed the real box. He had watched the overconfident De Pressensé, heard him mumble the combination, and he had never forgotten it. The combination clicked. He manœuvred the key subtly, in a curious rhythm of turnings, and at last he opened the box. In it was five million francs. He tossed a million to Aboudaram.

They waited for the telephone call. Athanase answered it. He was sorry that his friend, Duval, had not yet arrived at Claridge's hotel. "Please bill the inquiry charges, Mademoiselle?" "Certainly, Monsieur."

They let M. de Pressensé rot for ten minutes, then took his body to the edge of the Rue Maxenot; hurled it into a gas-main trench whose sweet stench would conceal his own.

Then M. Fabre left for Carpentras and M. Aboudaram for his wished-for Alexandria. He could safely be missed, whereas Athanase Fabre had to motor to Carpentras at once, rob the dossier, and return, for the telephone record showed him as at Marseille. Fabre got into the caverns at the opening of business at eight o'clock after taking a coffee across the street. He said casually, "Take these letters to M. de Pressensé."

## *The Cascade of Proofs*

THE murder of Lévy-Ruhlmann was the greatest piece of news that struck Marseille. At one bound it usurped the battles around the Ashangi Lakes in Ethiopia and the pleas of M. Léon Blum for the oncoming elections; even the discussion of whether the name of the overtrained candidate for defeat in America, Landon, was of French origin.

The newspapers were damp with the rich man's blood. Six reporters reconstituted the drama. History, psychology, criminology, chemistry, economics, all were drawn upon copiously. X marked the street in which the Hispano was found.

The stammering testimony of the chauffeur was given. He was deprived of his rights at once, and clapped into jail. The prosecuting magistrate and his staff of high-paid experts measured, snooped, stop-watched. After that scattered pieces of velvet with blood went to microscopes; fingerprints were worked on by myopic scientists; the learning of the earth was tapped to find out who had murdered the richest man in the city.

Stéphane Sabatier read of the murder the next day and wrote to his brother at once:

Onésime,

I suppose Béziers must be as agog as Marseille at the news. I suppose also that since your case rests on the judicial terrain only (law and not fact) his death makes no difference to you. You can collect from his estate. His victory over me was short lived. Still it must have given him a last satisfaction. He has lived his life, not a soul is the richer for it. They say the Chamber of Commerce will give him a special funeral. Our so-called socialist municipality is lavish with adulation, and calls at their house to wipe the tears from Mme Lévy-Ruhlmann, that is, if she has any. What a scramble for the estate! I presume he has tied it into knots and the lawyers

will undo them for many years. It is an interesting item of news; I shall make it the subject of a powerful painting.

Love to Cécile and the youngsters,  
Stéphane

Two hours later the police called at his house. "You just lost an important lawsuit to M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. Would you mind testifying as perhaps you are acquainted with his enemies?"

"I am an artist and I do not consort with assassins."

"The prosecuting magistrate must see you."

As they entered the magistrate's office, the doorman of the Opéra got up and pointed. "That's the man Lévy-Ruhlmann was quarrelling with last night."

"Did he answer the insults of the deceased?"

"No, he was silent."

"Silent under such insults? This is serious. He had no need to answer with his tongue, for he had another reply ready."

"Rubbish, you inflated politician," Stéphane was really annoyed by this ready and universally applicable method. "With your method, if I replied, I would be guilty, for I was enraged, if I did not reply, I am guilty, for I had something up my sleeve. Stop your idiocy. I left the Opéra with M. de Pressensé, he and I walked down to my home at the Cours Pierre-Puget, or at the corner nearest my home rather."

"Rather? You are not sure, your lies trip you up."

"Oh be damned to you," said Stéphane. "If I told it letter perfect, you would say it was rehearsed and pat, if I correct painstakingly, I am a liar who did not remember his story."

"And what makes you so preoccupied with the philosophy of truth in evidence, you a layman? I suspect we have the man in you."

Stéphane turned to the doorman and asked, "Describe the man with whom I walked out." The doorman, a quick and sure observer, drew a really good picture of De Pressensé.

"You recognize him?" Stéphane asked. "Summon him and he will confirm my alibi."

"Very well, then, wait here in the antechamber under surveillance."

An hour later, two policemen came back and testified that M. de Pressensé was missing, that his assistant Father Fabre had not seen him, that he was making frantic inquiries about him everywhere,

and was now on his way to the police. An hour later, the body of De Pressensé was found. The newspapers now were as happy as at the declaration of a world war. This was the best yet.

"So the alibi man is dead too. A pretty night's work, M. Sabatier. I believe he was your enemy too from what I had heard." Stéphane could not speak. This double murder was so strange, horrid, inexplicable, that he was silent.

"You were so cheery and voluble a few minutes ago. You thought it might take weeks to find the body at the bottom of the sewer. Now you are silent. Charming, Monsieur. You are an artist, that is clear. I charge you with the wilful murder of two eminent citizens of this city. I shall be pleased to accompany you later to the scaffold."

His fingerprints were taken. He held his hand limp, he scarcely knew how to poise them. The technical staff brought the fingerprint records on the throats of the respective victims; they were like Stéphane's! They were wobbly, not clean; faint, but unmistakable.

The accused was now silent. Deep silent. For there was something eerie, something there was no use in talking around. Either he was in a mystic world, where his occultation had changed and all experience was annihilated; or he was dead and in a realm of devils, capable of putting on any appearance; or everything was normal and he could deduce something if he were patient. The fingerprints apparently were his. He sweated. Was he a somnambulist, a man who walked at night with no correspondence with his daytime character, a man who carried two souls in one bulk? But the theory was refuted by one well-remembered fact, the murder of M. Lévy-Ruhmann. The police discovered the body at eleven-twenty-five, that murder was out. As to De Pressensé, that was equally impossible. The medicolegist testified that he was killed about midnight, and at midnight Stéphane was definitely writing in his journal about the concert.

Father Athanase Fabre explained where he was between eleven and twelve. The exchange bore him out in every detail. He had hurled the tell-tale gramophone into the bay after he had broken the record into a thousand bits. He looked dismayed.

The Bishop of Carpentras arrived and made all sorts of accusations. He stated plainly that he had a dossier on the wretch, that it was missing.

"He could scarcely have killed your brother after midnight,

rushed to Carpentras—that takes three hours—robbed your study, got on the road again, got back, and have his concierge report him as coming downstairs before seven. Technically it is not absolutely excluded, but how about the fingerprints?”

That settled it. Where was M. Aboudaram? No one had seen him for a few days, he had obeyed instructions to lie low. “He has been holidaying in Egypt, I think. You can reach him in Alexandria.”

“Oh not at all, it is clear he was not involved.” Fabre was released.

For days the police headquarters was thronged. A mass of witnesses and self-accusers appeared. Fertile imaginations, diseased fancies, hallucinatory identifications, endorsers of alibis, pictorial exaggerators, concierges, policemen, above all, that volatile and voluble breed, chauffeurs, came along. Reward seekers, anonymous telephone callers, delators, filled the time of the police. What had once been clear was now darkened by the thousand squids giving inky evidence.

The upshot of the business after two weeks was that the police gathered Stéphane's letters, journals, paintings, lithographs, sanguines, sketch books, photographs, manuscripts, and carefully enumerated the pack of them with judicial identification tags, all of which he carefully countersigned so that if he were proved innocent, they would be restituted in order. They disregarded all evidences other than fingerprints and the collaborative evidence of his hatred for Lévy-Ruhlmann and De Pressensé in records and pictures. Also, they accepted the motive of revenge for the loss of his suit and the consistent enmity of his brother and sister-in-law for Lévy-Ruhlmann.

Onésime and Cécile called, panicky. Few people in Béziers would speak to the brother and sister-in-law of a murderer, a double murderer. The café loungers now vividly remembered that Stéphane had been lonely, in fact very anti-social. He took on evil with the ease of a transfer picture.

Still, he had never been guilty of even the smallest misdemeanour. The police called at Saint-Jean-du-Gard. The Ramillé crowd swore he was a pure soul, the rival hotel guests remembered him as a beast, decorated with horns. The police found he was an itinerant circus follower for a week, a strolling player. This after being a millionaire at Marseille? There was a criminal insane streak somewhere.

His girl, described in the police records as “paramour,” Simone



Lamouroux, was missing. Had he disposed of her too? Soon the police of all France were looking for her. They found her in the remote department of Ariège. What was she doing there in the snowbound mountains all winter alone? A smuggler into Andorra? Fit companion for a double personality, capitalist, wine labourer, artist, strolling player, murderer. The police swept wider and wider. He must have burned the *Lucie de Lamoille*, he was guilty of arson, he had negligently not mailed the binder, and later tried to blame the spotless Lévy-Ruhlmann.

The reputation of the dead man was not so spotless, though. The high court decided for the Renouviers, so that they drove the Lévy-Ruhlmann interests out of their business. It revealed bottomless crime and chicanery on the part of the late capitalist. The De Pressensé suit was urged by the Bishop of Carpentras as legal heir; it was won in the first round and showed Lévy-Ruhlmann as a deep-dyed rogue. All the more reason then for killing him, argued the prosecuting magistrate, for Stéphane Sabatier was a mediocre criminal beaten by a grand Napoleonic criminal.

"Sabatier's psychology is perfectly easy to explain," he announced to the press. "He is a careful plotter, laborious, but he becomes erratic when his objects are not attained in a straight line. At every defeat he sinks into a substitution. At every defeat, Lévy-Ruhlmann emerged the larger man of the two."

"Internal jealousy, then?"

"Jealousy of the soul, if you forgive an old-fashioned word like soul, plus the more vulgar motive of vengeance."

"Why did he kill De Pressensé?"

"Because he hoped the Renouviers would win the entire estate of Lévy-Ruhlmann. De Pressensé had become a dangerous rival for big money."

The reporters saw that the prosecutor was a penny-dreadful philosopher, but they played him up as the "man who will redeem Marseille. When crime strikes in such high places, a halt must be called."

*Five Prison Visitors*

STÉPHANE was transferred to the prison at Aix-en-Provence. In the old cultural capital of Provence, in the city of gracious mansions of the Grand Century, he was to be tried for the murder of two men for whose death an æsthetic society would have paid an ample reward.

He was put into jail clothes, grey dungarees with a striped shirt, and bore the number 1907, the year of his birth.

It is interesting, he thought, that the jail uniform is that of a sailor and a labourer badly contrasted. They never put you into a uniform that marks the upper classes such as a plug hat and a frock coat. They are right, crime is poverty stalking in another shape.

He was not perturbed. As a prisoner who might soon taste the kiss of Madame Guillotine he was excused from work. He got to like the narrow cell. He was back in the womb but he had more room in which to kick and, as he consoled himself, he did not have to swim in his own urine. After several days of the cell he became more organized. He even speculated, as an artist, upon the mechanisms by which fingerprints can be counterfeited. He thought of ink rollers, carborundum, stamps, only to have technical consultants reject most of them. But he kept on for, apart from circumstantial evidence, that was what the case depended on.

His first visitor was his mother. Mme *veuve* Sabatier was upright, sharp, full of angular testimony to the miserable life we lead. She came into the cell, statuesque. She kissed him like a mother who is posing for a description of maternal status in an ethnology manual. She asked him if he had prayed for enlightenment, for of his innocence she was convinced by mystic evidence, that of maternity. No, he had not prayed. She regarded him, he could see, as one of the thousand martyrs of the Protestant faith in the South of France. Her history was not precise. She did not know that persecution stopped seriously in the days of Charles X.

"Be brave, my boy, as we have always been brave here. God

will watch over you. He will watch over you as He has watched over the Waldensians in the valleys of Piedmont, as He shielded our people in the ranges of the Old Beldame Mountains. Pray to Him, He is gracious to His elect."

She looked like an Augustinian canon or a Calvinist precept. The chaste lake of Geneva was in her clear eyes. He knew that if he were executed she would wince but not cry. The tables of the law given unto Moses could be broken in fury, but she could only be chipped. She left confident of his acquittal, for God was her private property.

His second visitor was his brother. Callers were allowed one at a time. Onésime waved aside Stéphane's enmity. "Don't tell me to leave, my poor brother. I am what I am, but you are where you need me. Think of me what you will but I am here to save you."

Stéphane looked at him coldly. "I swore never to forgive you. I am not so afraid of death that I have to forgive you."

Onésime expected that. "Stéphane I have just won back the whole of the Renouvier estate, I would cheerfully give the whole lot to save you. Take my money or my advice. Get Pressard-Monod. He is eighty-seven, I know, but I swear he has a ferment in his brain, for it is ripening with age."

Onésime told him that he had proof fingerprints could be transferred. Apart from that the prosecution had the thinnest tissue imaginable of conjecture, some irritable letters, the *Lucie de Lamoille* suit. The procurator of the Republic, Paradol, was a low politician. If they could hold the trial until after the second balloting, he might be booted out by a socialist minister of the interior. Blum would not authorize the sentence of an artist on a trumped-up charge of murdering a member of the two hundred families that rob France, according to his every speech. Especially when that artist is a champion of the workers in Marseille.

Stéphane was practical. "The trial is set for April twenty-fifth, the second balloting for May third. France will think of nothing but politics. Even my friends will be occupied every hour, their minds will be on their one chance to win. From the prosecution's view, what could be a better time? Who will worry about one man?"

"Take Pressard-Monod?" Onésime asked.

"Yes, I am dead and he is gaga."

"Stéphane, you forget what you are joking about."

"The guillotine? Look at the company I keep. Saint-Just, Lavoisier, André Chénier, our élite."

"They died for politics, causes."

"In the last resort, what do I die for? Strip the mask. The state seeks the life of a dependent of the rich Renouviers. Ordinarily wouldn't it try to explain those crazy fingerprints? Yes, unless I was presumed to have killed the plutocracy incarnate, I, a socialist. I am a pin point, a start for the tracery of their class. That's all."

Onésime's old quarrel with Stéphane boiled up. "Don't try to make history of everything that happens to you. Things are what they seem. You are accused. The state is simply doing its duty. You must prove them wrong. It sounds Philistine but it's true." Sympathetic as he was, he was irritated and left brusquely.

Cécile was next on line. She kissed him. "I tried to bring you a soft pillow, I embroidered the case. It was silly. Of course they don't permit it. Have you heard from Simone?"

"No."

"Do you miss her?"

"Yes."

"She is coming. I know it without knowing it. You miss that wonderful girl, that is why you have had such little zest for your defence. She is more than a woman. She is a stormy wife clothed in genius from head to foot. She despises me but I admire her. She does not resemble a man in anything, from her womanly features to her madcap loyalty. She never meant what she said when she flew at you. Woman language must be translated. She meant 'Go away substance, too much for me. Give my airy fancies room.' She will be back."

Stéphane smiled.

"Am I right?" she asked. "Isn't Simone coming to you?"

"I wish I were sure, but Simone is not like me. I can only measure myself as one of the many. Simone has such immense bursts of confidence, such an impassioned belief in her genius, that, when this tension relaxes and she looks about, she is stopped, as by a bullet, by the fact that the world has not accepted her deserved opinion of herself. Then she must fly. I happen to be the fellow that's in the way. But I believe in her character and her genius. A thousand outbursts would not sway me."

Cécile was touched and said irrelevantly "You suspect genius unless it is generally appreciated. You are right. I don't think

there could ever have been greater poets or artists than those that have become celebrated. No matter how ardently a man sees this quaint old globe with his unprecedented eyes, it has to be ratified by common perception."

"Cécile, I am surprised. I have been unjust. I thought you . . ."

"Frivolous. Stéphane, when it comes to me Onésime is the better artist. He has studied me in adoration since I was four! I delight in caprice, teasing, sham war. But only a few weeks ago, Onésime worked out my thoughts, fully, tenderly. Love is the best teacher of character. I know you are pained by what he has done. But I am the guilty one. I cannot reproach him with tending the fruit trees from which I eat.

"Stéphane, take courage. You will win. Be less stern. Have my gentle Onésime's soft rain of insight. It sinks into clayey soil, every soil, even though it wakes up plants but lightly."

He thought: Good Girl. Even at this moment, she must advertise her boy.

She kissed him very tenderly and then shook hands in the French manner.

As she walked into the outer corridor she met Simone, wild-haired, unbonneted, frantic. She was counting the flagstones as she paced. She ticked the telltale minutes Cécile was taking from her. Only ten minutes were left for visitors. Cécile called to her but Simone heard nothing. She darted past the guard when he opened the iron door.

But as she entered the cell, she did not rush at Stéphane. She advanced, held both his temples, turned back his head, and watched deep into the eyes of her beloved. He was haggard, dried of the vital juices once so overflowing. She said nothing. She knew from that expression what no worldly Cécile would ever know, that he was condemned. He had measured his own span with that sunken sight; the arc was described. She let go his face and looked at him again. Still they both said nothing. Her scrutiny gained his forehead, his very ears. She was like a slaveholder appraising a purchase. She had bought death. She must return the purchase. It was awful. Stéphane! How could she entertain one thought of death? It taught nothing, mere hideous dissolution.

He held her firm but still did not kiss. That seemed trivial. They trembled together. Her time was up. At last she spoke

"Expect me every day, Stéphane." She lifted his right hand and kissed the bend of his index finger and ran out.

She must reanimate her husband. She spent the walk back to the lodging house in tortured thought, wondering. But, Stéphane was calm and strong. Was this the girl who left him so insanely? So many times? That was her surplus. When life was stripped of ornament, she was simple. He must live. He had mastered art but not Simone.

The next day she called in the early morning and brought marchpane moulded in imitation of fruits and *charcuterie*. She knew he would be cheered by the silliest things he liked. They were permitted to be alone for twenty minutes. As she came into the cell she dropped her basket and flew to him. Her tense fortitude of the night before was forgotten. They lavished embraces and kisses and both cried. It was some time before she could pick up the basket and get hold of herself by pretending to be interested in his eating the sweetmeats. He ate several, praised them, and so got himself under control. They spent the rest of the time looking at each other lovingly, they were beginning to find words when the time was up.

"Simone," he asked soberly the next day, "you are the most truthful of women. Tell me, do you expect me to be found guilty?"

"Yes."

"Simone, you see no way out?"

"Of course, dear, but not at the first trial."

"I feel that too; they must convict. It is a duty they owe themselves as a throat owes itself a drink."

"Yes, Stéphane, but the story only begins there. You have me, you have the people of Marseille who know what you have done, you have those who love you. Why should you resign yourself? It is terrible to see you so placid. Last night I had such visions . . ."

"Of my head in a basket?"

She looked at him strangely. "No, never that."

"Yes," he added with deliberation, "of my head in a basket."

He ate a sweetmeat to suspend Simone's outburst. She was afraid to cry, afraid that her long planned stoicism would not outlast the minute. Her man was in danger, that was all she could think of.

"Simone," he said, speaking in a reedy style as though his larynx were scratched, "when Mother came, I saw that she felt the human jury would acquit me but her concrete-imbedded, reinforced-steel

God would not be so indulgent. You feel the opposite, that the jury is lost but everything else is gained."

"No, no," she cried, "don't think of death; we will spend years together. I can see them, I saw them last night in my dreams, they were so rich, so lovely. Stéphane, it was revealed to me, our life is only at its beginning."

He was not impressed. His eyes looked outwards, he was forever straining at attention. "No," he spoke with his eyes downcast, "no, Simone, you love me, thank God, but as for me, I am prepared only to end my days with an intensity beyond what I have ever known."

He turned to her, not wanting interruption. "Dearest Simone, I haven't done a single first-rate painting since you left. I am only a body without you. Where was my mind all that time?"

"I have seen your paintings at the procurator's office, they were not quite the best you have done."

"My life was inferior to the best, I lived it alone. I missed you terribly."

Simone wanted diplomacy. Her old habit of telling the truth survived even in that miserable cell and with her doomed lover. "I missed nobody," she affirmed. "I flourished in the snow desert. I stayed in the wildest part of the Pyrenees. I shared the white mountains with voracious beasts and birds. I ate up time, love, experience. My prey was in a frozen state. It was love. I saw it at last in its many shapes."

"Can I see what you have done? It would keep my mind on other things than . . ."

"No, Stéphane, never, never. They are for every eye but yours. With you, dearest, I live directly. No, no pictures, nothing at second hand, not between us." The guard stopped her protestations.

The next day he asked, "Simone, your certainty about the jury had me thinking. You believe I killed those two men?"

"Didn't you?"

"Why, no."

"Oh tell me, Stéphane, no one is listening."

He was silent. Simone looked him over slowly, took a long time to reflect. "Oh well, no one ever does such perfect things. I only dreamed it. I really thought you had got rid of those horrors. But we're all fakes. You and I too. Here we go about making a great parade of our socialism. The rich make the world foul,

they are robbers, they themselves are rotten. Dearest, I don't know what to think. We are told it's worth the martyrdom of millions to get rid of them in a revolution. Yet I'm glad that you didn't kill them. Now I *have* changed my mind. The jury may acquit you. Oh, Stéphane, I am no superwoman as I told you when I raved at you as we last parted. I would a thousand times rather have you innocent of the murder of those horrors, and keep you, than be proud of your guilt. I am a girl like the others."

"I am just a mediocre fellow, Simone."

"You are not," she was downright. "Don't say that; every fool says that about himself. I am afraid of the trial again. They know you hate their society, you haven't been strong enough to kill. They will sense you are an enemy, but not dangerous. They may hurt you." Her tone, for the first time, was that of a worried housewife.

"I'm weakening, forgive me," she had begun to sob and held back. "Oh, damn it, why was I born a woman? The whole game around us is that of men, buildings, railways, engines, wars, everything. And I'm not even a woman. I don't circle about my womb and breasts. If I were, I would know how to save you. I am a cursed hermaphrodite, a woman without children. I think I am an original; I am just a freak, useless."

"Simone, hold out. If I can do it, you can. Come, come, console yourself. How many men are different from women? Most of them work to keep a family, they are economic wombs." It was his first laugh with her.

She looked up somewhat relieved. "I am no help to you. I was never devoted to you above all. I am shabby, selfish." Before Stéphane could reassure her, the inevitable guard punctured their talk.

A week before the trial, Pressard-Monod, eighty-seven and confident, came in. He had the experts on fingerprints ready, at least ten. They were from foreign countries because French criminologists were on the official staff of the state. They were agreed that the fingerprint testimony was not conclusive.

He rubbed his hands. "Wait till that rascal, Paradol, faces me. I will teach that fat nonsense some lessons in the criminal law. Reserve me a fine champagne supper when we win; I think I can name a special *cuvée*. Also let's begin our dinner by *coquille de Saint-Jacques*. They are my weakness as with *croquettes de volaille*. Made with a *vouvray* sauce, that's what I like. Disguised tastes, I am old you see."



Stéphane saw that he was really confident. He had a leather case with encyclopædic references on circumstantial evidence. Like the operetta inquisitor, he entertained no doubt, no manner of doubt, no possible doubt whatever.

The night of April twenty-fourth came on. Stéphane's mother died that afternoon. Her logical frame had dispossessed its ghost for no good reason. The real reason, that her son was accused of murder, and that she was eaten from within with fear, could not be sensed easily, because of her stern behaviour. Simone knew that she had cracked with fear; others thought it due to organic disease and "recent worry."

When they advised Stéphane, he was quiet. "Death is doing a fair business among the Sabatiers. Oh well, I cannot waste my last days lamenting Mother. I suppose it will please Onésime if I am buried beside her. I am sure she will sleep beside Papa at Pézenas. She was quite right, if my head were not screwed on to my neck, I would forget it one day. So I will. I suppose Onésime will not be able to attend the trial to-morrow. Well, he has much to attend to."

*The Philistines Inspect Sanguines*

THE court at Aix was decorated for the much-touted trial. The president of the tribunal and two auxiliary judges were weighted down by red satin robes and heavy ermine. It was a dreadfully hot day. They deposited their ermine-lined caps on the desk before them. Above them the bust of the Republic and the full figure of Justice were well polished. The court-room was full of reporters, of a literary type rather, for this was a unique trial. The motivation of the crime was to be related to the paintings of the accused. In the intellectual capital of a genteel province, this murder trial conformed to its atmosphere.

In a niche just above the judicial dais was a bust of Mirabeau, member of the National Assembly for Aix-en-Provence, the most corrupt politician of the French Revolution. He symbolized much.

Stéphane was led in. There was a murmur of approval from attending fellow artists in his group, from union officials, from a deputation of grateful wine-growers. He had to stand through the trial at the bar of the accused. On the second day he would be permitted to sit between the two supers, great-moustached gendarmes. Brilliant sunshine struggled to get through the large dusty windowpanes. They passed giant shafts of light, in yellow dancing dust, into the musty court.

The jury was polled. The talesmen were exclusively well-to-do men, practically all conservatives in politics. There were chosen a master baker, a leading florist, a casino manager, a professor of Latin, a building contractor, a civil engineer, a physician, a sports-field manager, two *rentiers*, a bank manager, and a prosperous estate agent. An undertaker was ruled out amid journalistic laughter. No more likely jury for the state could have been selected.

Pressard-Monod was not interested. All his life such men had sat in jury deliberations and he knew no other class fitted to judge. This trial to him was like any other.

When the jury was picked, a yell came out of the back-benchers.

"Only the rich," "And to think we are in a Republic." "Republican sentiments in the Judiciary." "Make justice conform to the people's will." "The Popular Front will expose your travesty." "*Hou, hou*, the murderers."

Stéphane's champions were vociferous. They smelled an abattoir. The judges ordered the Republican Guard to clear the court. They brandished swords in cheap glory and made sure that the spectators that remained were at least appreciative of the objective attitude of the court.

The jury, visibly disturbed by these ruffians who failed to appreciate their honours as peers of the accused, took oath that they had no vision, hearing, prejudices, never read any account in the newspapers, were God-given blanks on whose receptive sheets light was to fall.

The prosecutor formally read the charges and a summary of the evidence on which he rested his case, also the names of witnesses for the state. He expressed regret at the death of the defendant's mother and he was agreeable to an adjournment for two days. Not wanted. The trial went ahead.

Pressard-Monod summarized the defence: alibi, no true material proof, idiotic circumstantial supports. "No worse founded case has ever been made up out of the figment of an ambitious prosecutor's imagination. We can easily rebut what he flatters by the name of evidence. His corrupt dependence on Lévy-Ruhlmann makes him a posthumous jackal . . ."

"Apologize," commanded the president.

"Certainly, Monsieur."

Stéphane insisted on taking the stand. He gave his alibi; as for the fingerprints they were his, clearly, but transferred. He could not drive a car. He never owned a stiletto. As to De Pressensé: it was not he that had an interest in a stolen dossier concerning Fabre and did anyone pretend there was trace of the missing five millions on him? He had an unblemished police record, not even a misdemeanour, not even a contravention. This was his first court appearance. His civil record was equally without a fault. He owed no money, he paid every bill, he had never been sued, never bankrupt—for he had fully discharged all liabilities.

He looked about. Simone was not there. Cécile waved gently but Onésime was arranging their mother's funeral. No Renouviérs, they were shamefaced. The whole Lévy-Ruhlmann clan was present,

Rashi-Mordecai in command. They were less cocky after their financial losses, even though these were only a third of an immense fortune. The revelation of the curious history of their "martyred" father, in two trials just decided, made them wary. But they were glad to be in at the kill and they glowered in family synopsis at Stéphane.

Stéphane's concierge testified she was sure he rang the bell before midnight. That excluded the De Pressensé murder.

The defence called its experts. They testified that fingerprints could be reproduced, engraved, raised, and be transferred from conveying mediums on to celluloid. But they disagreed so violently among themselves as to procedures, whether chemical, photographic, and in the arts, that they left an atmosphere favourable to the prosecution. The plain evidence of fingerprints seemed more plausible than this rank garden of criss-crossed hypotheses. The teeming vanities of experts overcame the conscientious preparations of Pressard-Monod. The prosecutor laughed out loud. But Pressard-Monod scored when he forced the state to admit they could produce no instrument nor evidence of robbery, and when they were forced back to a mere assumption that Stéphane must have had a confederate to drive the car.

Stéphane's letters, written from Arles, in reply to the antennal approaches of Lévy-Ruhlmann and De Pressensé, were cited. The letter he wrote his brother after the assassination was exhibited to show his cold-blooded indifference to the murder of his enemy. The law case in the *Lucie de Lamoille* and the fact of the murder immediately after the highest court had told Lévy-Ruhlmann to sue for defamation was made an immediate motive for getting rid of his opponent. The clan hatreds of Renouvier and the old millionaire were elaborated to infinity. The procedure took three days. The flesh wearied of their proofs.

The first balloting in the parliamentary elections supervened on Sunday. It was a landslide for the Popular Front. The jury came in on Monday, fuming, in miserable humour. Their backs were up because of the taunts as to their class composition made in court on the first day. They felt now as though rich men ought to redress the balance of the elections, in court. Especially as the evidence, to them, seemed excellent. After some legal rapier play, the real trial began on Wednesday the twenty-ninth, when Paradol brought all sorts of canvases and folios and catalogues with reproductions of Stéphane's work to prove his dangerous mind.

"To show the intent of assassination, by paintings, is a rare privilege," Paradol began, "and this privilege would not be mine if this fiend, this degenerate enemy of mankind and all its most cherished institutions, had not mirrored in these pictures a soul intent on the destruction of all society and especially the destruction of one man, that honoured merchant of Marseille, M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. Born in Alsace, he renounced German nationality to be faithful to the tricolour. Yet that did not spare him from the cowardly stab of an assassin, one to whom nationality is as alien as honour!"

"Man is moved by ideas, idea forces, as the great philosopher, Alfred Fouillée, observed."

"He was a ponderous donkey," some student cried in the back of the courtroom.

"Order," rapped the president. "Continue your speech, M. Paradol."

"You note in that very outcry against an established reputation, which you have just heard, an example of that destructive thinking. Now, members of the jury, the influence of literature on the French Revolution is well known. The blows at religion of Voltaire and Rousseau, D'Alembert and Holbach, Helvetius and Condorcet, led to a destruction of all values, to a hurling of society into the chaos called revolution. Art has been as potent as literature. The romanticism of Delacroix, to take one example, was aimed at the Bourbon monarchy; it would be tedious to multiply incidents. Let us examine the background of the work of the twice-infamous murderer, Sabatier.

"Sabatier was conditioned against the majority to begin with. Son of a pastor, he was nursed on the legend of injustice. Not that our Protestant fellow citizens are not Frenchmen of the first rank, witness Guizot and Doumergue.

"But a weak, rebellious nature would find that minority tradition undermining. He came to Marseille to make money: he did so by callously ruining that angelic character, Xaver de Pressensé, whose bereaved brother, the honoured Bishop of Carpentras, is in this court asking for earthly justice at this moment.

"He was beaten in commerce by his own carelessness, or, as I vividly suspect, but disregard this, gentlemen of the jury, by an arson that was not professionally consummated. Sabatier is next found as a tramp, a strolling player, some type of mountebank, what does it matter, Messieurs? He goes to Saint-Jean-du-Gard, he is friendly with a girl, Mathilde. He tells that to nobody, but we

unearthed it. There he paints a first important canvas, in the style of that Courbet, gentlemen, that tore down the glorious Vendôme Column to satisfy Communard madness. Sabatier ridicules the townsfolk in this picture, he is out of tune with them, it is an insult. He is above these honest folk.

"Our investigators tell me that a gentleman of an old family warned him he was on the path of destruction; he brushed it aside. Mathilde dies suddenly, don't ask me when and where. I should have dug up her shallow grave had I but proof enough.

"He goes to Arles. He is degenerate enough to inherit an irregular love from his brother. He must needs appropriate everything, even love. He has ample opportunity to confer a name, a status on this girl, but has he done so? No, gentlemen, for he hates marriage as he hates society. He wants woman at second hand, the sport of man, awarded to him as on the auction block. He kept her as a mistress and a mistress he often discards. She is sent away. When he wants her to amuse him again, she is recalled by him, for he is a dull criminal, incapable of attracting others.

"At Nîmes he lives better, for his sordid brother has married money. His taste for success is rearoused. His paintings are all stamped with the image of M. Lévy-Ruhlmann. We have four characteristic paintings, which see.

"A mob broke into their home, they say. The assassin allowed them to destroy everything else, but what must they keep? They kept, this precious pair, the four paintings that show M. Lévy-Ruhlmann as an involuntary model for four vices: avarice, craftiness, fraud, theft."

He paused and dramatically wiped his brow.

"Family Lévy-Ruhlmann, do not be horrified. None of these lies can compare to the knife. None. I pass by degenerate paintings done at Carpentras, their insane symbolism already shadows the homicidal maniac.

"In Marseille, where his intended victim lives, his rancour has no limits. In this painting, he shows Lévy-Ruhlmann with his twelve children, all his sons represented as base animals, but the girls are shown as courtesans. Murderer, could you not spare even the foulest insults on helpless women? No, nothing but your hatred was important to you. He who takes honour from six women would find it easy to choke and stab two men!

"He travesties the two marriages of the Lévy-Ruhlmann and

Renouvier families because their love and friendship interfered with his plots. His cruel picture had much to do with breaking up two idyllic homes. A series of cartoons, vicious ones, are now exhibited." (He passed them to the jurymen.) "Draw your own conclusions. His next painting, the *Popular Front's Delicatessen*, is a direct incitation to mass disorder. Study it. It disgusts us by its flamboyant colours. Everything for this painter is hysterical, overstressed.

"M. Lévy-Ruhlmann out of the goodness of his heart writes: 'Come let's talk this over.' He is scorned, Sabatier says to Lévy-Ruhlmann: 'I bear you a grudge.'

"The mania gains; he shapes M. Lévy-Ruhlmann as a gargoyle in what is euphemistically termed a Popular Front demonstration. By this means our national holiday is perverted into an instrument for dividing Frenchmen. Drunk with the worst traditions of the French Revolution, he shows the breasts of his concubine to the mob, the Goddess of Reason, forsooth.

"Then, commissioned by Father Fabre to do some etchings, he insults his patron by showing the papacy as permanently corrupt and vicious; Lévy-Ruhlmann is its protean lower façade. Now, gentlemen, observe the twelfth large etching. Here M. Lévy-Ruhlmann is shown as the corruptor of present-day society, and this is no symbol, no incorporation of the unfortunate man as a leitmotiv, no, it is a portrait, finished, exact.

"His impudence no longer requires a disguise, he defames openly. He exhibits these pictures, in fact the whole collection. Innocent journalists, not knowing the long history of their intentions, praise his workmanship. As soon praise the aim of a gangster with a machine gun or the throwing of an Algerian spear that tears a French soldier's heart!

"But even his workmanship, his imagination now slips. He portrays a ship, the *Lucie de Lamouille* in one instance. This ship reveals the alleged horrors of the social order, that social order, gentlemen, that has given us everything fine and ennobling in the world to-day. He prepares for vengeance in the courts, he sues. The court denies him his infamous claims and characterizes him for what he is; baffled, he stabs and strangles.

"A fine artist, aye, but not too fine an artist. Not artist enough, Monsieur the Murderer, to conceal your telltale fingers. By themselves they are enough! Artist enough to leave an imperishable scroll on the necks of your two victims! But go further than those

soiled hands, consider the long, minute preparation for this crime in the record of art. Art? I would despise the word if it implied such subjects, such intentions.

"In sending this man to the guillotine, you accomplish the greatest work of art, the beauty of justice. Last winter he went out to a rocky island to be alone, he stays near Hyères, he skulks, and hides. One says, these episodes have no meaning. Have your honourable lives such incidents?

"May the Republic tear out of the salons of Montparnasse the bizarre, unreal, crazed, analytical images that are leading men to destruction. A sane art, such as a Boucher or Greuze gave us, is the evidence of sanity, of a civic quality. The art of Stéphane Sabatier led him to the assassin's knife."

He sat down to rest amid mingled bravoos and hisses. M. Pressard-Monod thought he had finished and rose to refute.

"Monsieur, the procurator has not finished," the court snapped.

"Excuse me, I thought that he had reached the limits of turgid inconsequence."

Paradol, refreshed, summed up. "Specifically, you will note that his brother is president of the Employers' Federation of Hérault. Yet this foul assassin did not hesitate to use socialism or communism—I am not versed in the subtleties of destruction—as an instrument against Lévy-Ruhlmann. I hold no brief for the beliefs of these revolutionists, but at least they believe what they say. Here their ideals are channelled into the service of a vulgar feud for lucre.

"They talk of him as an artist. Messieurs, look at our beautiful world. What has built it all? The savings of laborious men! They have denied themselves like ascetics that they might the better build for eternity. France is full of gardens, of cultivated land, of modern factories turning out goods that delight the buyer. Foresight, that is, honest savings, built it all. Every one delights in it except a born crank. The accused is deliberately, viciously, astigmatic. Fine artist! Did Sabatier once show the beauties of savings?"

There was a roar from Stéphane and from the back benches.

"Silence, enemies of honest prevision," yelled Paradol. "You see, Messieurs, that is funny to them. They do not see muscles, they see only cancers; they do not rejoice in the blood's course, they see only germs. This unhealthy man could not rejoice until he destroyed two useful men.

"Vindicate your own honest, co-operative lives, Messieurs



the jurymen, strike as citizens, strike as parents, strike as honest folk. The bereaved families want to believe there is justice somewhere. Have you the hearts to disappoint their stern demands?"

He sat down, with approving nods from many spectators and sympathetic glances from the tribunal and jury. Pressard-Monod rose. He was out of his depth. A strict lawyer, he knew nothing of flimflam.

"I decline to discuss the art show put up by my histrionic adversary to conceal his want of evidence. Murder must be proved beyond doubt. The psychological evidence adduced is a threadbare literary and philosophical essay upon which you might flunk a boy at school but not take a man's life. Away with gingerbread ornaments!

"Sabatier cannot drive a car. A thousand pictures do not answer that. No chauffeur is produced nor can they hint at one. They admit there is no proof of theft. Surely they might have asked the delightful Father Fabre, that ghostly weasel, why the dossier left the bishop's palace? Surely he should have been extradited from wherever he is to answer some embarrassing questions? But no, that might prevent a conviction. The evidence of the concierge was not impeached.

"The fingerprints? My experts, they say, disagreed as to techniques. So they did, Messieurs, so they did. But on what did they agree? That they can be transferred. Consider the vague imprint as found on the dead. Where is the weight of evidence?

"Messieurs, the prosecutor has proved that malicious art is bad, that rancour is bad, that France, as at present constituted, is beautiful, that some people do not like it as much as he does. But you are all graduates of *lycées*. You know the section on fallacies in your logic books. You will see there illustrated the vulgar sleight of words whereby the object contemned is flayed so that the careless listener is made to hate the crime so much, that he forgets the question: who did it? That was Paradol's sorry trick. You will not commit a murder because of his dirty demagoguery."

Stéphane was permitted to say a few words. "Messieurs, the absence of Athanase Fabre is decisive. He was a known criminal, he is missing. Two trails lead to him. I am innocent."

The jury filed out. In less than an hour it asked for the sketches and water colours to be sent in. Pressard-Monod was worried. They were being fooled. They then asked for charcoal sketches,

oil paintings. Two hours later they asked for sanguines, the series prepared on the *gavaches*. The twelve Philistines were horrified by this threatening world. Only a scoundrel could be so depraved. Lévy-Ruhlmann, one obsession, the Church, that is De Pressensé's connexions, another. Personal vengeance for ruin, family feuds. Fingerprints clear as crystal.

Stéphane Sabatier was twice guilty, subject, therefore, to the guillotine.

Simone hissed and screamed, Cécile and Onésime wept, Stéphane was grave. He shook slightly at the neck. The Bishop of Carpentras openly applauded and the Lévy-Ruhlmanns bravoed noisily. The procurator arranged his robe and posed for flashlights, smiling. He might survive the elections on this success. Pressard-Monod in his senile broken voice moved for appeal, which was granted. But he was a broken octogenarian, for he had failed to deliver. He looked at last as though he were near the grave. Beaten by a social approach, something of which the code never spoke!

Stéphane was sentenced to die on May eighteenth. That was merely formal as the appeal would not be reached by then. "Is Simone here?" Stéphane asked.

"Here, beloved." She came to him, but the guards were brutal.

The courtroom was cleared. Simone, alone, sobbed.

*Love Under the Knife*

ONÉSIME raced about from one ministry to another. He got Monderoy to intervene, tried his best to get the new Popular Front leadership to recommend clemency at least. But despite the elections of May the third, despite the wave of democratic and labour enthusiasm sweeping the country, the Left could not take over power until the first week in June; that was how the system went. The appeal was to be heard on the eighteenth of May. A further appeal was possible to the highest court, then one could always seek an audience with the president of the Republic. Onésime did not tell Stéphane of his supplications. He knew that mendicancy was not popular with Stéphane who dreaded the guillotine not much more than soliciting favours for the just from dubious politicians.

Unfortunately for Onésime, the ministry of justice was convinced that the material and moral circumstances had built up an irrefutable case. The Court of Appeal dismissed the demand for a new trial without a hearing. Onésime received strict orders from Stéphane to proceed no further, "For if the highest court and the president decide against me, posterity will be sure of my guilt. The ladder of confirmations will be too tall. If it rests where it is, I will be dead, but later some little fact may slip out that may shame a scoundrel like Paradol. Simone is convinced that the murderer was De Pressensé or one of his crowd and that Lévy-Ruhlmann was slain in some internecine fight. I have never known her wrong on such matters. I would rather follow this approach than get down on my knees before demagogues, red-tape winders, and the varied malodorous garbage that haunt ministries."

Father Athanase Fabre had read of the Dreyfus case. He feared that a rich brother does not sleep until a poor brother is vindicated. What Matthieu Dreyfus did for his brother Alfred, tear down the pillars of the Republic lest his brother suffer wrong, might happen again. The murder was slick but you never can tell. Fabre had left with his five million francs for Bavaria, there to annotate the

*Patrologia* in the palace of the German bishop who had befriended him at Toulouse.

You don't look for French Catholics in the heart of the Streicher country in Germany, where the Church is systematically annoyed and degraded. It was a good move. Even Onésime did not trace him there; he was lost, without a bubble showing where he sank.

Onésime hired detectives to study the Pressensé caverns. They found that the robber must have made at least five complicated moves that required detailed inside knowledge.

At last, a warrant was issued for the apprehension of Fabre, but for robbery not for murder. Paradol got over his difficulty by pointing out that it was natural for a lieutenant to rob the till once the master was gone. He might as well get the swag as the Bishop of Carpentras. Paradol decided to seal the case.

He got a sewer rat, against a promise of immunity for a theft, to swear that Stéphane offered him a hundred francs to drive the car for half an hour. He was given a uniform and told by Stéphane that he had stolen the Hispano to make an impression on his girl, an apache. Paradol also got a handpicked committee of the Academy of Science to state that: "Upon the present level of technique, fingerprint transfers are too defective to be of real utility." It meant little but, as Stéphane said when he heard of the three tricks of the state, he could feel the knife, it was so cold.

Onésime tried to trade with Monderoy. He became a suppliant for his support before the new government soon to come into power. Monderoy had planned to do this anyhow because he was convinced of Stéphane's innocence. But he skilfully used his position to jockey a two-year agreement out of the frantic Onésime. The unions got what they wanted. It turned out that by yielding to them, Onésime avoided the costly sit-down strikes that followed and finally made more money than the reactionaries.

The execution was to be set for June twenty-seventh. Simone was allocated thirty minutes a day, the others, fifteen between them.

Simone had installed herself in a hotel at Aix. She weakened. Her father had to leave Arles and stay with her. She wanted mostly to be alone but she must speak to someone when the strain was too great. She knew that apart from a miracle after Blum took power, nothing could save Stéphane. She knew Fabre was guilty. No one else was so sure. Her father had no opinion except that

his girl was wretched. She tried to handle pencil, crayon, anything to take her mind off one man, but it was impossible. She was exhausted. For all that, she forced Paradol to restore all Stéphane's works, keeping photographs of them for his files. They would be her heritage; she could live with all he had in him, if he were not there.

On the thirtieth of May, Stéphane was taken before the assizes of Aix to hear final pronouncement of sentence. Simone was allowed to sit beside her lover. Gallantry triumphed over the rules.

The president of the court was not cruel. He pointed out that the Code provided for murder, that two lives had been taken, that he took but one in exchange. It was only half the *lex talionis*. Before going further, the accused must speak.

Stéphane, unprepared, answered from his chair: "*Monsieur le Président*, you are asking me to speak the truth. If by truth, you mean, did I kill two men? the answer is *no, no man*. If by truth, you mean that they or their kind should not exist, I answer *yes*. If you ask me should a Paradol die, an enemy of the spirit, a defiler of ideals because of his fetid success brain, I answer *yes*. And if you ask, *Monsieur le Président*, do I repudiate my vision of man and society, of nature and representation, as expressed in my work, my answer is a thousand times *no*. Death on the guillotine is more beautiful than from disease, cowardice, the battlefield, dotage; what a pity it is not as just as it is clean!"

The judge rang his bell and proceeded to sentence. Simone arose and said, "Is life so sacred, Monsieur, that you did not approve ten million homicides in the War?"

The judge looked at her, and continued, "Therefore, Stéphane Sabatier, painter, from Pézenas originally, is condemned to death by the guillotine, June 27, 1936, within fifteen minutes of sunrise, or, more exactly, of the time of sunrise. The court is . . ."

"Not adjourned," Simone cried. "No, *Monsieur le Président*. You have his head but I speak for my life."

"Mademoiselle," interrupted the presiding judge. "I have tolerated two outbursts because of chivalry. This is outrageous. You cannot convert this court into a forum. I appreciate your love for your friend, but he stands condemned. This court rises."

"This court does not rise," she shrieked, and took a revolver out of a knitting bag. "I do not fear death, but you, old executioner, you do."

She advanced to the dais while covering the gendarmes with her gun. When she stood on the dais she kept her revolver aimed at the old judge's heart. "If anyone stirs, I will shoot the judge."

She pointed her gun at Paradol who looked absurdly deflated. He was sure she would kill him, he didn't dare move. His knees began shaking, this doughty prosecutor. Somehow, despite the extravagant situation, that released the pent-up feelings in the court. A wave of laughter rolled over the spectators. It was Simone's golden opportunity.

"I address the coward Paradol. You bribed the man who swore he was hired as a chauffeur by Stéphane Sabatier. You consciously filled one gap in your evidence. You would rather see my husband dead than admit a flaw in your case. I hold you responsible, therefore, for his murder. When, even after my beloved husband is dead, new evidence shows his innocence, and if even one part of the evidence you have collected is known to have been invented by you, then I shall press for your conviction to the guillotine. And with the Renouvier millions, I shall obtain it.

"Monsieur Paradol, on the twenty-seventh of June the knife falls, fifteen minutes after sunrise, but it cuts two heads, not one.

"We shall not rest until those that condemned Sabatier are either in flight into cellars like the wretched Esterházy, or suicides like the forger, Colonel Henry."

Paradol rose to protest. The judges, at first shocked, then overcome by the French love of court melodrama, beckoned the attendants to leave her alone.

Simone ordered, "Oh sit down." He did; again everyone laughed. She stood above the court, then spoke her message.

"I speak not for you, Philistines and pharisees, but for France. This is my forum but you are not my audience. Do not try to comprehend me, it is impossible. You are blind to beauty, deaf to beauty, dumb to beauty, anæsthetic to beauty; you smell flowers only to make profits in perfumes.

"We do not fear the guillotine any more than a soldier fears the battlefield. He fears it too, but he is a soldier. The guillotine was a thing of beauty when it cut off those that had sold their country, a Louis, a Marie Antoinette, when it clicked corruption with a Danton, when it counted off ribald revolt with a Hébert. How it cut off shams! It fed the shapely baskets with rhetoricians, demagogues, traitors. It cleansed France. But it is an uncon-

scious knife. It was a hideous, ashen grey as the clouds of reaction passed over and Saint-Just fed that jade, Madame Guillotine. Blue blood and black blood had spurted under a clean sunlit knife, rich red blood spurted under the cloud-flecked knife.

"Stéphane and I would both rather fall on swords, swallow cyanide, die privately by the exit we choose. The public instrument is for the public good."

She took the judge's wineglass and drank. "Stéphane, speak."

The presiding judge motioned her revolver away. Stéphane's serious broad face was nervous, but not for fear of the sentence. It was rather that he was afraid the swarm of ideas in his last justification would be so great they would lose all form.

"I introduce myself, first and last, an artist. That is the content of my life, to restore vision. Man breathes badly, lives a short and a nasty existence. The artist, scientist, craftsman are the three servants of a full life.

"You do not see, so painters exist. The world is full of harmonies, yet you hear little; it is the musician who pours notes into your ears. You speak in faltering prose or jagged metres, so poets sing to you. We are cripples of the senses.

"To-day we see sickness only when a man coughs, spits blood, when a cancer eats out his life so as to sustain its own. We call doctors the men who apply poultices, squirt enemas, stab with surgeons' knives. After magic, *that is the first*, the savage state.

"Now we have the doctors of hygiene, athletes, dancers; they make man whole, his muscles taut, his eyes clear. He does not merely avoid disease, he courts health. That is the barbarous state—I use the expression as exactly as a Greek.

"Then come the true physicians, the artists.

"We view mankind in the way it views monkeys: they resemble us but they are not of us. You are incapable of appreciating the external world with the intensity of Dürer, Rubens, Michelangelo. You call them geniuses. Nonsense, there is no genius. There is normality. You are sick, your eyes are myopic, unsweeping, so you call these full-visioned men geniuses. It is as though the lame call walkers geniuses, as though the monkey calls man a genius because he can obtain coconuts by the use of a sling.

"My paintings were exhibited in this court by a hospital case, Paradol, to fellow inmates, the jurymen. Where I painted, out of the fullness of sight, the Lévy-Ruhlmann nature, he called it an

obsession. Whole seeing of one episode is obsession, part seeing normality! How well you stand on your heads, pathetic acrobats.

"From what sources does an artist draw his visions? From reality. It is fashionable to say you can arrange blocks of statues and horses' heads, split light into cubes, talk of the Parthenon as a bad radiator. But I know that, if the wildest extravaganza is to be true, it is rooted in experience.

"Lévy-Ruhlmann was the one man whose avarice cut clean across my hopes. So I understood avarice.

"I worked in the wine fields. In them I learned to see the hills spinning about in the sun; I caught the fervours of the setting sun with my sweats. My symbolism? He referred to my 'mad' paintings at Carpentras. Ignoramus, a symbol is a form of understanding. We use alphabets to correspond with sounds, the Chinese use ideograms. O abysmal sick soul, you are at the ape level of understanding. How can you weigh evidence, Paradol, you who have no senses, you who are a defective!

"Hear me! My paintings are simply the testimony of an honest man. Perhaps another painter will see it all differently. He too is absolutely truthful. How can I think like a classic among modern workers? The only liars in art are those that put down what everyone sees but themselves. These are the men that Paradol calls the 'classics,' the refinement and elegance of the social order we threaten.

"Simone has asked me to speak. I have spoken as a Frenchman and an artist, not as a man who goes to the scaffold. Do you know why? Because to-morrow ten people will cross the streets of Marseille, they will be knocked down by tram, bus and taxi. That is their scaffold, I have mine. Wheels crush and knives cut in so many forms!

"The judge and the procurator referred to my politics. I hate politics and the political type. Socialism means to me the freedom of men from class struggles. Then there will be no politics. The issues before a social group turn about physical objectives. A non-political nature such as mine can only grow under socialism. Men want simple adventures in balloons, polar seas, trailing in forests, following the wheat plant to its sources, or studying the growling of avalanches. Or in machinery, improving gadgets. It will be the republic of happy fools, of God's fools.

"The politicians who are working for socialism will not like



it when it comes. For they are working for their own extinction but they don't know it. I am an artist, I do know it.

"What will the artist concern himself with? Oh, not with problems. Not with revolution, that will be over. Fancies like *The Arabian Nights*, yarns such as Sindbad told, fragile poems like Mallarmé's, who can tell?

"But I have faith. Like my ancestors in their temples, *I believe*. Clean knife, you will cut off no despair; you will simply end one man who hopes and believes. Let him pass, the others come. I have done. I have not said just what I wanted to but I must stop, I am ill." He sat down on the judges' dais.

Simone rose. "Hear, my lover has spoken. I see nothing as he does. I have thought his work terribly wrong. Love is the only unity that keeps two souls advancing in their destinies, yet understanding each other.

"I am at one with him. This condemnation is our marriage. You are killing him while he is still growing, when he was on the point of being fused with the people.

"The people are sick, but not so sick as you. When they triumph, they must learn some arts from you, for there is no other school. You hand over a heritage like a grandfather of ninety, he has been a horror for a long time, but he has the gold; from him alone the children can get it.

"We are working towards the bright morning, forty times longer and a thousand times more brilliant than your carefully regarded, carefully recorded dawn. As my Stéphane said, what the splendours of the sunset of this planet may be, no mind as animal as ours can yet conceive!

"Your guillotine interrupts a good job. So we wanted to speak. God has given us Provence; our soil an offering on the altar of the sun, the ferments of our plants, the delight of the heart.

"Hear me, Stéphane, love, forgive me if I survive you here!"

Stéphane said simply, "That, at last, is for us alone. The court is adjourned."

Everyone obeyed the prisoner. Simone presented her revolver to the presiding judge. He escorted her to the door. She would not be punished.

"Thank God, I have spoken," she cried to her father. "It saved me from madness. I know that was but an hour away."

## *A Sordid Temple of Aphrodite*

JUNE in 1936, was the fairest in many years. It was never hot but always pleasantly warm; it was cherry-time and the zephyrs scattered the fruit with their lazy sweeping. Berries had a size, fragrance and lusciousness that made them rare delights. The streets of Aix slept sweetly. Their trees had a languorous, abundant air and they caressed those under their branches with their deep shade. The sylvan beauties of the countryside matched the civic trees and guarded gates like happy old servitors, or bent over tombs with genteel pity. Yet that month was quiet only for nature. For Frenchmen had not been so active since the World War.

It was a grand revolutionary lark. Class supremacy had shifted and the change was taken as a picnic. The workshops at Aix, as everywhere else, were occupied. There the workers enjoyed themselves as in Mid-Lent. Queens of the Popular Front were crowned with garlands, and Maypoles were erected in grim factory yards. There, as girls held each red ribbon, the tunes of *Carmagnole*, *Internationale*, *The Red Guard*, incongruously set the pace for country dancers. The machine shops were festooned. Wives and children were admitted and grand family parties given. The mobile guards did not dare interfere, for that would displease M. Léon Blum, the new prime minister, the herald of a socialist dawn. It was the honeymoon of the People's Front.

From the fertile conjunction of all Left parties, a socialist France was thought assured. Even the rich were resigned. They sold their francs in billions. They even sacrificed French shares, since an inflation can be hedged but not confiscation. They stupidly trusted their fortunes to the wolves of London town, preferring their capitalist blandishments (and immediate loss) to trusting their own people (and proximate loss). A class in flight is too weak to resist. Therefore, as is usual when there are no difficulties, M. Blum reconciled the beaten, wooed the toothless lions of capitalism, dreaded the anger of the perplexed foe, allowed his enemies time to regain strength,

and proved once more that a novelist likes fiction and makes a futile prime minister.

The case of Stéphane Sabatier came up before the Guard of the Seals, a socialist, and charged with the examination of unjust trials. Monderoy led a deputation to demand re-examination, Paradol instead laid twelve pounds of dossiers before the permanent officials. The new Guard of the Seals, already a master of diplomacy, referred this minor case to a new socialist under-secretary. This ambitious fellow consulted, of course, with the more expert permanent officials. They produced the usual summary of the documents by which the *chose jugée* always seems right. As the French mob once sang:

*A civic gem, the chose jugée,  
Sing then, and praise  
Socrates well poisoned,  
Jesus grandly crucified,  
Joan of Arc so justly burned,  
Sing its praise.*

"Comrades," the under-secretary observed, "let us not besmirch the first month of the people's triumph by tampering with the administration of justice. What will they say of us? No sooner are you in power than any verdicts rendered against those of your faith, yes, even for felonies, are revised at once. You have no faith in the age-old magistracy, in the profoundly democratic institution of juries.

"In France judges are not former lawyers; they are not corrupted by long habits of special pleading. They are officials who rise by judicial merit. They are outside of party. The staff of conscientious experts here, who work under their patriotic oath, work equally for any ministry chosen by the people's will. They are men, like you and me, and if they unanimously declare Sabatier fairly tried, I ask you, how shall we know the opposite? By a sixth sense? By party zeal? God, no. Not that. Even a socialist must stand the penalty of murder, even of a plutocrat. We should lean over backwards to avoid criticism, we should be Roman in integrity. Comrades, Sabatier would have fared better under the old regime. But I say now, no political revision of justice. France is clean once more."

Monderoy attempted to ridicule his reasoning, but the under-secretary rose and stopped him curtly. "Nothing influences me. I have spoken in my duty. Your eloquence will be party biased, I must close my ears."

It was lost. The sorry delegation saw that the cowardice of the very men for whose accession Stéphane had so striven, had betrayed him. So it was in every ministry. Not to the same extent but it was the same infection.

The merry crowd at Aix suspected nothing of the kind. The explosion of life and hope, the burst of happiness, in that popular stem was beautiful, all buds burst big and burst at once.

Stéphane read the painful note from the delegation. He tried to smile at the farce but turned sick. It was some time before he was in sombre routine, despite Simone's steadiness.

Simone and he stood, like the simplest of lovers, holding each other and kissing, or sitting down on the cot, their hands together, saying nothing. The first fortnight in June Simone had talked of the fresh life outside, the last fortnight the shadow of the scaffold could no longer be ignored. It was dark enough to chill the warm June days; imagination and love froze in it.

Spring passed, the vernal equinox was nearing, it was the twentieth of June, and the last Saturday in Stéphane's life. The air outside was so sweet that its fragrance came through the tiny cell bars. Violet, sweet pea and mimosa conspired against the damp walls. The consequent mixture was strange. It was a scent that would have delighted an old strumpet, perfume made musty. Simone sniffed in it too the odour of a madam; it was so different from the clean smell outside.

For the Sunday, Simone brought tar and worked with it patiently. Stéphane was grateful for it. He spent his time smearing the crevices in his cell. The tar was rich and fused with the flower odours. It created a pungent aroma, fresh, potent, and astonishingly aphrodisiac.

On Monday it rained heavily, a rare thing for that time of the year in Aix. At evening the odours of the fields became overwhelming. The next day the smell of grain crops overcame those of the wild flowers. Mixed with the new-mown hay, the tar had created a troubled atmosphere.

On Tuesday, Simone was permitted to visit towards evening. She held one long kiss for whole minutes, was silent, kissed for still

longer, and said good night very quietly. That night the dreams of Stéphane were insane. They were, for the first time in his captivity, directly sexual, immensely detailed. When he woke up on the Wednesday morning, his remaining three days of life were indifferent to him. He would have traded a pardon for ten minutes with Simone's body.

In the morning, his by now neurotic brother, wearing mourning for his mother, and the sorrowing, no longer sprightly Cécile, called on him for choking talks. He listened to them lovingly; still he was so involved by his needs that he dismissed them a bit offhand. They attributed it to his horror at the forthcoming Saturday. They were not offended, only the more sorrowing. It was difficult for them to go through the next three days. They did not have the courage to stay at Aix, but motored from Marseille. They spent every spare hour trying to get the bereaved family and the Bishop of Carpentras to ask for a life sentence, or, at the least, a delay of execution for one year, so that the possibility of error might be excluded. The survivors were belligerent. They were going to be present at the execution. Onésime offered to restore their position in the Renouvier family interests. Only Rashi-Mordecai, who really loved Gisèle, entertained the offer. The others were so busy gunning for each other on the inheritance that Onésime was absurd. To come upon that pack, devouring each other, and talk of mercy and justice, was quixotic. The Court of Appeals had thrown out the De Pressensé suit on a technicality, so the Bishop of Carpentras hated everybody and everything.

In the prison at Aix, Stéphane thought of only one thing.

"What is the matter, are you hungry?" the guard asked as he saw him pacing like a black leopard.

"Hungry, yes," he murmured.

It was four o'clock. Simone would not come until six. But when she came? What then? He counted it, he had only sixty hours to live. Why didn't they give a man a sixty-hour round with his girl, a complete satisfaction? What would exhaustion mean to him? What anything? If a condemned man had no girl that he loved, send him up anyone. Disease does not matter. He is beyond everything but pleasure. Responsibility? Pregnancy? If the girl wishes the risk, what is there for him to consider? Why do they always give the dying man a banquet of food and wine but not of woman? Is it because sex is the gateway to life because it con-

tradicts the guillotine? He paced up and down, a pure animal. The veneer of art was cracking under the heat of desire.

The guard came up with his supper, bread and two hard-boiled eggs. He was considerate, yet what difference did it make? Stéphane laughed at him, the decent chap. "Food," he said, "is not my only need."

The guard was not slow on the uptake, he winked and said, "*Eh bien!* I am a father of a family, I am human. I have been tipped off that the governor of the prison is going to dinner at the casino to-night. I know nothing."

"What do you want for it?" Stéphane was French—rational enough to put everything on a money basis.

"Monsieur," he said, offended, "what would I think of myself if I failed to oblige you with something dearer than life? No, if the governor is absent, as I hear, your friend need not worry, I'll see to that."

When Simone came in at six o'clock, the guard informed her that for the last three nights it was the rule that he stay outside the corridor gate. As Stéphane was the only prisoner awaiting capital punishment, this meant that he and she should really be alone in his cell. She knew what Stéphane would expect. It was horrible. The union of their bodies, once beautiful, once the expression of love without end, was now a brutal service to propitiate the damned doomed man. She was afraid of it. It might defeat them.

No sooner had she entered the cell, and the guard was heard closing the gate, than the passion-soaked man held her in a way that spoke directly.

"Be quiet, my dear, we might be heard."

"And if we could," he asked fiercely, "would you rather leave me hungry, miserable?"

"Stéphane, how can you ask, must I answer you?"

The thin, striped mattress of his bed, hard, lumpy, over crude broken springs, the lining torn and not long enough, was to be the platform of their love. A young man about to die, a woman grazing the edge of insanity, a foul dark cell; seldom has love's poetry endured severer tests, seldom its lyric muse had to sing in greater pain, rarely to counter more ugliness.

Stéphane was savage but still he could not bring himself to his girl without those rich, varied preparations that are the essence of love to the Gauls. Powerful as were their fires, they knew in

what boilers they burned. Stéphane maddened as he became aware of his hideous jail clothes, Simone still could think of her negligent dress, she who was so beautifully presented to him at Arles. In all his straightforward assault, Stéphane covered her with kisses. She gave him none in return for she was in a nirvana, an overwhelmed spirit; Simone Lamouroux was floating and replaced on that awful cot by some dark being.

The half-hour was nearly over before they rose from the cot. Simone gathered her nearly spent forces and served them to hysteria. Stéphane, his crazed wants brought to a brutal full stop, shuddered. He would have no competing system of thought to hold him. The guillotine now had no rival.

Simone looked strangely at him and spoke with a massive deliberation. "Darling, I took into me a draught so potent! Stéphane. Oh let it quicken! That liquid freight, may it rest in my womb. But if it is true," she looked on him with dread, "it is a dead man's child."

Stéphane was bitter. Sour injustice dried his mouth. "Child of the terrible fairy tales, the headless man. It will carry its father's head in a sling, fling it on the balances of justice."

Simone opened her mouth wide, for an unnatural shriek, but held it long, as though it would be fixed there horribly forever. She was dumb. Her mouth was framed for cries but nothing responded. At last she fell on the bed relaxed.

"Oh how ugly this end of love, this sorry business. Look at this cot. God's joke." She reassured, "I am not afraid, dear, of the memory this will leave me."

The guard unlocked the corridor door. He spoke delicately from a distance. "You can have five more minutes, Madame."

She railed at her hysteria and spoke to Stéphane in the old fair accent of love. They left in love, just simple love, again. She went out in the late sunny afternoon and in its sane glare lamented her overwrought expressions, her taut offences to Stéphane in his last days. "I ruin everything. I should have thanked God I could help him."

He slept early that night and woke up at three the next afternoon. It was a twenty-hour run of splitting headache, the hammers of pixies and elves at first, those of Thor and Vulcan later on. A third of his remaining life, these twenty hours of drugged, sick sleep!

*Banquet, Blade and Basket*

THAT afternoon he heard his fellow prisoners say that the assistant of Monsieur de Paris, as the executioner is termed, had come down with two apprentices from Paris, that they brought with them the second guillotine. The first one was to be employed that day at Angers for the decapitation of an Algerian peddler who had killed another in a brawl over five francs. "An assistant executioner, I do not even get Monsieur de Paris, it's a good second-class death."

He heard the faint ticktack of their small hammers, carefully adjusting the guillotine in the prison courtyard. They erected it delicately, for its functioning has to be smooth if the knife is to descend with such speed that death must precede any possible conscious reaction of the victim.

Stéphane went over every detail of its structure. Every French boy has read innumerable accounts of the guillotine. It occurs in detective stories, in revolutionary legends. He saw them building the small platform, no higher than a metre. He peered out of his cell and could not take his eyes off the grim act.

First they criss-crossed four beams like a St. Andrew's cross. They built the floor of the guillotine over the beams a little hurriedly. They erected the grooved, upright posts about eight feet high. They put the crossbeam on top, it was pleasantly sculpted, not plain. Stéphane was more fascinated than ever when they put a hook into a hole in the crossbeam and attached it to a thin plank; immediately under it, the famous "hat," to which they attached a terribly heavy, triangular steel blade, on the diagonal.

They tested it up and down, pulling it by a bell cord, to make sure it slid smoothly, quickly. They were solemn men, and had long lank faces as in the cinema convention of the French Revolution.

Up to that time he could look almost unconcernedly. But when they put in the lower plank at the bottom, notched with a semicircle, and the movable upper plank that comes down to click with it, also notched with a semicircle, the two composing the head hole, called



the "little moon" in the vernacular, Stéphane turned sick and realized that this was for a *criminal*, something he was not, something from which his boyhood church training had shied him away. He could not take off his gaze until it was finished, he must see it through.

He saw that above the steel blade was a leaden mass. That was why it came down so heavily. It must weigh well over a hundred pounds, so as to plough its way through an eight-inch-thick neck.

He pictured the business. He wondered how his head could be put into the little moon, for it was over a yard from the floor of the guillotine. Then they laid down a plank behind the head pole, in the position of a lever, the "scale" on which the body is outstretched, to which it is tied. The head alone projects through the little moon. Underneath it, they placed a bag of pebbles as a make-weight to assure its spring. They left it vertical until the weight of Stéphane's body should change its position.

By this time, he was a citizen of the guillotine. It was his future home. Horror passed away. He was intensely interested, really fascinated. It was his one entertainment, performance, break in the hours of silence. They completed the pivot on which the lever rested. He was waiting for that, he didn't like an unfinished job.

His new composure ended when they placed an inclined plane next to the lever platform and deposited against it an immense open osier basket lined with zinc and filled with bran. In front of the head hole they fixed a block upon which his head was to fall, nicely.

He watched the head block, the knife and the basket, to the exclusion of everything else. He tried to be merry with a ghastly bravado, but it was no use, he sickened. The three executioners covered the machine with a grey cloth lest rain spoil their precious scaffolding. They adjusted the basket like artists, they measured exact distances with a tape, they shifted it repeatedly by fractions of an inch until it was just so. Then they spoke, for the first time. "Now for the *apéritif*, my good friend."

It was six o'clock. It was Simone's hour. Onésime had not come, he had a high fever, he was bedridden. The condemned brother read the note that Cécile sent. Sick or well, they would be there Friday.

Thursday night! Simone went through it wistfully, spoke little. He asked about her future plans; she rambled along without much concentration. The time passed, that was the only object of both.

That night the warmth of spring departed, the pasture month

of *Prairial* retreated, *Messidor* came in with his active sickle. The heat suddenly shot into the hundred degrees, even at night it hovered in the high nineties. It was so uncomfortable in that cell that the mere adjustment to rest led to sleep, to anything to avoid the wear of the hot night. After a twenty-hour headache, sleep, and the sight of the guillotine, Stéphane thought future sleep excluded. Actually he went through the hot night dreamless, undisturbed. When the choir of birds woke him up at six in the morning he was refreshed. He enjoyed their creaks and twitterings, caws, notes and gurgles.

The sun was all conquering. Never had his cell been so light. The heat was so intense that only the odours adapted to it were wafted over: roasted coffee and hot bread, olive oil and spilled wine. They came out of near-by shop and tavern.

He could not believe that this was his last day of life. It was altogether too agreeable. In a way he was entertained. He fancied his fevered brother keeping telephone and telegraph wires busy to the president of the Republic, the ministry of justice, the council of state, the prime minister.

I must have a weak neck, he thought, it seems to need the mucilage of the highest powers to keep my head stuck to my body.

He greeted the guard who brought him breakfast. "Georges, do you envy me?"

"No, Monsieur, but I think you are acting pretty much as they all do."

An hour later Georges came in and asked, "Does Monsieur want the pastor to be present? Monsieur is a Protestant?"

"No, no," Stéphane cried horrified, "no, now I feel the meaning of death. The heavenly vultures are descending about me. Keep them out."

After that Stéphane lost hope. The hours dragged. He tried to fritter away attention. He thumbed an almanac, glanced at a newspaper, read the account of a football game with forced detailed attention. The afternoon came, three, four o'clock. He had scattered his nerves in these distractions.

Onésime came in, his face dirty with wide trails of tears, he choked, held his brother's hand, and tried to speak. "I know, Onésime," he looked at him as when they were little boys, "all the potentates you wheedled and bribed have failed you. Thank you, Onésime. Now do one thing for me. We were farm boys together. Never forget that we were poor. You belong to an assumed class. At

least, teach that class to die gracefully. It has to die anyhow as I have to. Why must every class die so dirty? Promise me, Onésime, don't let your love for Cécile make you a worse man. Be the man she thought you were when she defied her family. Promise, Onésime?"

Onésime said simply, "Not even for your last moments, Stéphane, will I pretend that I will be unfaithful to my work. But I shall be generous, never vicious. You know me. I was not born, as the saying is, but cast. I tried to escape from what I was and failed. You could change the whole purport of your life but not I. But I swear to you, Brother, that I shall support no tyranny to keep our money."

The two French brothers, carefully identifying their emotions, rigorously exact even in tragedy, shook hands formally and kissed each other on both cheeks. It was the farewell of loving brothers and civilized men.

Cécile entered. The last three days showed her first crow's-feet, first suggestion of dark spaces under the eye, first wisps of grey hair. There was a longer line to her cheeks, the Lencidoll softness was going; she would look somewhat prim in the near future. She pressed Stéphane's hand but shook. She kissed him in her petite loving way. A shudder passed through her bird frame. He knew she was picturing him with his head severed. She could not say good-bye and was at last carried out by two guards.

Stéphane was alone for half an hour. Owing to Onésime's large payments, Simone was permitted to share his last supper.

Stéphane's orders were thorough: "I want to have a clean gizzard. Remember I shall be a corpse doubly exposed to air. The open vent of my gullet will cause quick putrefaction. I shall eat nothing for ten hours before the end. My last supper is at five with my wife. I want a pullet whose neck has been wrung, not cut. Oven-baked potatoes, a half bottle of champagne, a *mirabelle* tart, and black coffee. My liqueur must be light." He insisted on the governor's plate and linen. "My brother must have paid enough to buy it."

Simone was grateful for Stéphane's well-thought-out dinner. She had to be at her best and dress her best and not look mournful. That was his last wish. All day long she worked carefully on her appearance and so put away, from hour to hour, the terrible vision of to-morrow. Never had she looked so beautiful. She posed before her mirror as when she was a girl intoxicated with her genius

and good looks. She went over every pore with cream and massages, worked up her make-up like an actress, to make sure no sign of tragedy or even common concern was evident. She wore a cubist brooch, a small tiara, finely set with ordinary marcasite, snake bracelets, amethyst and sardonyx rings, but no necklace. Her hands faltered when she touched one. She wore point lace over her old Botticelli velvet dress and above it, with the tiara, she harmoniously placed the Arlésienne coif she wore when they first slept with each other. She was scented with a sandalwood toilet water that was too light for heavy emotions. Its delicacy would help them keep their minds on a lighter plane.

She swept into the cell and sat down in state like Herod's daughter. She tried to suppress fear and emotion and at first ate as though nothing would interrupt this luxury. Stéphane made one grim joke about the gold plate on which the chicken was served and asked his Salomé about her funeral dance. She wavered, tried to smile, talked trivially, true *passe-temps*. At six-thirty she tried to rise. She became unconscious. Stéphane was alarmed and the guards escorted her limp body and half-alert spirit along the corridor. Suddenly she became aware she had not said farewell. She stood up, composed her features, wiped her clear eyes, braced herself, and walked back to the cell.

"At five to-morrow evening, my good friend, as usual?"

"As usual, my dear friend."

She turned and walked, quickly increasing her steps to a run as she neared the prison gate. The ghoulish crowd that waited outside cured her for a moment. She walked out of the prison, head erect. The sentimental women declared her a harlot, cold-blooded, who would soon get another irregular love. Others thought she was cheap, trying to copy the long-exploded legend of the indifferent aristocrats in the tumbrel list at the Conciergerie of Paris, but some saw that she was just a sick girl making a brave show. A minute later their theories were not needed but a doctor was.

Stéphane waited until the table was cleared, and then lit a cigarette, his first in months. The right way to leave Simone. Done.

The prison doctor called at nine. He was a squarish old man with an equally squarish floss-white beard. "Can I help you! A sedative, or a good sleeping draught?"

"No, Doctor," Stéphane spoke earnestly, "I have an unusual request, a comic one in some respects. I feel messy and I want a

fine hot bath. I want a really efficient aperient. I propose to die clean inside and outside, and unworried."

Stéphane was taken to the governor's bathroom, watched by guards to see that he stayed above water. He must not anticipate the vengeance of the Republic. He put on clean jail clothes. He scrubbed his teeth with the temporary enthusiasm of a schoolboy who has just been lectured on caries. He was shaved carefully. Two guards watched for any motion, and the blade was dull. Ears and nose were searched for fugitive tiny hairs. "The cleanest offering to injustice, my body will lie fresh in the aromatic bran. I hope they fit my head nicely. They are usually less careful or they don't do it at all."

By these devices he prolonged his unconcern until three-thirty. Sunrise was at four. He was to die on the hour, fifteen minutes after dawn. By three the courtyard was crowded, despite the efforts of the governor to discourage attendance. But the law made execution public. The Lévy-Ruhlmann tribe was pacing, the Bishop of Carpentras mumbling, and in front of all, for everyone made way, was Simone Lamouroux, dutiful but ill. Sulking on the outskirts was the silly, fantastically mean François Renouvier. Others came.

The yard was lit by flare lamps. The executioners came on wearing their dominoes and frock coats. They took off the cover from the instrument. "It looks what it is." Stéphane was degraded. "Now that it has no raised platform it is just a vulgar head-chopper. The glory of the Place de la Concorde was in elevation."

He looked out and saw six guests of the Hôtel des Cévennes at Saint-Jean-du-Gard who had come to see the execution of one of the hated Ramillé faction. That was the last grotesque touch.

Simone placed herself so that she could look into his face and she would be nearest as his head fell from the block. It was her duty to stand by her love to the last, for no horror could transcend her devotion.

The dawn was on, yellow grey. A signal was given. The flare lamps were extinguished. The executioners tested the apparatus. A wagon came into the courtyard driven by four white geldings. "As for a bullfight," Stéphane cried; he had forgotten the ceremonial of removing the body.

By three-fifty-five it was fairly light. Stéphane ascended the low platform. With him were the prison governor, the doctor, and three executioners. The governor read the sentence. The

assistant executioner bound his hands behind his back. The governor asked him to address his fellow citizens, that France whose laws he had offended.

Looking at Simone, directly, he spoke: "I die like most mortals, confused. I gained two worth-while things in my short life, a good woman and the ability to see things better than I expected. In the last year or two, I had begun to understand what I owed to men, present, future, and they snap the shears.

"As to the murders for which I am to be guillotined, frankly, I know nothing. I remember a procurator of the Republic who insulted the purpose of my life, and who, from my best work, drew the strange deduction of murder. The procurator, a moral cripple, beat me with his crutches.

"I salute in a France I shall not see, her redemption. I want to be buried at Pézenas, head and all. This is a very disjointed speech. But I have as yet disjointed ideas and I shall soon have a disjointed body. Forgive me if I disappoint your dramatic expectations of a stormy denunciation of the injustice done me.

"Simone, dear wife, have a death mask made of me. Insist on it. Live and work and remember love can happen twice. Do not lament me.

"Kindly, now, tie my body to the plank."

The muffled drums of the *garde mobile* began the ceremonial. The unflinching tattoo marked the remaining seconds with the dull thud of a fallen body. Stéphane refused the blindfold. He bent down and placed his head over the notch on the lower plank. The upper was released and his head caught in the "little moon." Now he looked on the head basket. Simone's hair was visible, ebony, finely parted and glossed. The drums beat again. The executioner pressed a button, the bell cord was pulled and down came one hundred and thirty-two pounds of steel. The drums were silent.

The head fell, bounced in the basket, and faced Simone. Her muscles were dissolving, but she held erect. His body rose with the plank as it snapped back. His legs pirouetted a step or two, the death jig of a marionette. He was hurled on to the inclined plane and fell clean into the bran. The executioner deftly took up his head. He exhibited it to the attendance. It spurted a fearful amount of blood but the face was undistorted, strong, clear. The head was carefully placed between the legs of the body. The basket was then set by the *garde mobile* on to the truck as the troops walked with

reversed arms in the arrested deathstep. The governor saluted the remains of the law's prey. Then the four white horses galloped at fearful speed out of the yard to the receiving vault of the Protestant Cemetery.

Simone was the last to leave. She was alone. Her father was prostrate at the hotel as were Onésime and Cécile. She had gone through one thing to the end, she, Simone, who broke everything before.

*Simone Sums up Simone*

THE courtyard was covered with drummers. Simone walked past them faster as her nerves went looser. Outside, her ears reverberated to muffled drums. Their thud was the same as her heartbeat, slow, powerful, immutable. Her own eardrums were being beaten by a congress of enemies. They massed in her auditory canals, a congress of dolls, about a tenth of an inch each. There they beat tattoos, pulling up their robes of judges, barristers, procurators, wardens, soldiers and police. They swarmed in and out of her ear passages, all slimy, covered with open infectious sores, the pus running over. The more they exuded poisons, the harder they beat her drums. She reached for her ears to expel them. She took up a small fragment of wax and fainted in the street. Quick-thinking horses swerved about the unconscious girl, who was taken home by spectators weeping for her lover's death.

In her fever which ran on for days, the dreams of Simone were shrieked, and paid out at three hundred to four hundred words a minute. The grand lunatic flow could not be dammed. The doctors agreed that it must go on until she was exhausted wholly, when they could begin treatment. The highest pitch imaginable, a succession of strident keys, were wholly unlike the velour voice of Simone Lamouroux. They revealed what her restraint and organized manners had taken out of her. Few sections of her speech could be recorded but a faithful house-surgeon (a poet as well) made the following notes which he says he did not edit or make smooth:

"Have I scooped them all out of my ears, Doctor, tell me. It is so dark I must ask you. No, there is one left. He is not drumming a muffled tambour. Why, Doctor, he is vibrant! He is my own lover. But his time is faulty. Stéphane, come out of the dark, your time is wrong. His tunes are breaking, the melody is snapped. What is it? Doctor, he is dead. I knew it. Oh pick him out of my ear, Doctor, it is so dark there. Stéphane, your enemies have gone, come out. Do not stay dead. I know it now, I feel him. He is



too large to leave. Open the canals, Doctor, let him out. You are a jailer like the others! Turnkey, open the gate. He has stopped beating, his lively tune is over. It had started for a minute. He is growing in me, Doctor, I feel he is choking me. He is in all my head, he is pounding at my eyes, they are his window; buried fellow, he must break through. His drumstick is beating on my optic nerve, he yells, 'Light, light,' into my ear. He is still growing, I cannot stand it. He is rubbing the back of my tongue. Oh I must vomit. Little lover, be gentle to me. He has gripped my lungs now, he is pressing the air out of them. Pouf, let me breathe. Not below the diaphragm, Stéphane, not there. That is damaged enough by you, dark show place of your lover's arts. He is in my heart, do you hear the splashing? Funny little fellow, he is washing his hand in my veins. Oh I feel easier. Thank you, Stéphane. Doctor, he is becoming small again, why, he is little. Where are you in the unseen passages?

Oh, Doctor Richard Bright,  
My kidneys hold my darling wight.

Shrinking little drummer, are you comfortable? Why, he is a pinpoint and, imagine, he is turning somersaults within me. He doesn't beat any more, he must be tired. What became of his head? Oh there it is rolling on the floor. It is a hundred-franc gold piece. Image of Lévy-Ruhlmapoleon, droll affair. He is balanced on three balances, you funny coin. There he is jumping from balanced debit and credit, shame on you! now justice's balances—why, the coin's in a sling! No, Doctor, it is balanced on an inclined plane. He has stopped rolling, tails? No, *head*.

"Dear head, do you miss your body? Darling Stéphane, mask head, be polite, I only asked you a civil question. You know your body is now a poltergeist pinpoint in my womb. But your head is as big as money—oh, I remember, that's what separated it. I see, it had to fit a coin. Forgive me, Stéphane, I am obtuse. Not at all, thank you. Get in that head, get it in deep, oh it is so large, so swelled, pouf, it's spurted, I saw it held up, it's collapsed. All right now, comfy? Good, head and body together again. What'll it be, boy or girl? Tell me, Doctor, don't you know. Sex is dark, no X-rays are sex-rays. You tell me from the gloomy womb. I cannot hear. Oh, I forgot, your voice isn't formed yet. A girl. Simone

Joyeux. What a lovely name. Stéphane, no boy. That's a bargain and I am fair play. You can scoop me into your basket of talents? How can you if . . . That basket idea? Where did that come from? Marketing, that's it. Oh, say, what am I here for, Doctor, am I ill?

"There is some light. Strange light. I don't like the flash of steel. One diagonal blade of grass is cut where two grew before. Bodies, Japanese use them for fertilizers, strawberries is it? Wrong, must be manure. Strawberries are at Carpentras.

"It was along the river Rhône. There are limestone cliffs. They are a miserable ash colour, like the hair of the middle-aged. Cover your once-hot soil with a lava-coloured bush. On such a cliff sits Arles, my own, her extinct passions dusted by grey chalk.

"Stéphane, there I gave you my love, and everywhere else I heaped living coals on you. I was right, Doctor, I was right. Who has my talent and beauty? You are wonderful, Simone Lamouroux. Blow your trumpets, for their cadence is heavenly and true. Stéphane Sabatier, you saw me with my weaker eye. Oh, Doctor, I should have learned modesty. Pooh, what were you good for? Stéphane for getting me with child? A few minutes stuff of creation and you run out, cheap species, men, I laugh. Ten turns of the moon and my creative world has only begun.

"Doctor, tell the truth, men are so incidental. Gross beings. Incidental. Brain and love your two incidentals. Funny. Women can lose their heads, Stéphane, but never their insides. One ahead, one up. Surgeon, you need a pretty speculum to see us nice.

"*Stop that head rolling.* It makes a noise in D minor and I hunger for majors. Army? I suppose so. Be minor. That was what Stéphane wanted me to be. Good pun, no a bad pun, it cost him his head. Why then he is dead. *Qu'importe?* I must have said that before. My vanity. I see you in a dark room mirroring nothing. I strut before you, unanswering ebony glass. Who painted you over? You did, my love? Open the shutters. The room must be light. No, Stéphane, drape the mirror. Not that. *I must see others.*

"Hello, others. I salute you with my breasts, Simone of the Ephesians, Mother of all the Gauls. March, Think, Batter the castles of the Unjust. They killed my Stéphane. Injustice, it takes a million heads, a billion heads, it anticipates the sickle by forty years! It sees them in love, it sees them in creation, it hates life, it wants coins,

coins with sharp edges, not milled; sharp enough to cut human heads. Weary heads of bargemen, drop into the Loire, weary heads of miners, roll into the gas pits. Beat out your heads, O grains of wheat, make bread flour. Lost head of Stéphane, am I lost without you? It is lighter, I see the room.

"Oh how it has grown. A multitude. Poor multitude! Poor Simone. I thought I witnessed Creation for the first time and I saw it with the borrowed vision of centuries. I knew I painted with my own force. It was other men that shaped the forms made by my unblest hand. My fevers are gone, my dreams are passing. Stéphane, I am without you. I am not confused, I can speak reasonably. Oh land of Provence, let me be a good daughter. France, let me serve you with the others. I shall not lament you, Stéphane, you told me not to, and it is wise to follow you. I shall work and paint and sketch and bear my child in my Arles, in the dead town that gave me birth. Where I met you, there I must work. Oh paint, my persuaded brush! I have mixed oil and egg, first things of life and art. Thank you, Stéphane. It is sad you cannot go along. I am aching for you, dear, dear friend."